

MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT IN POST-SOVIET KAZAKHSTAN:  
IDEOLOGY AND LEGACY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## **Abstract**

My dissertation examines the interplay between ideology and entertainment as reflected in the holiday cycle of post-Soviet Kazakhstan. During a two-year ethnographic study of holiday celebrations and expressive culture in Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and China between 2004 and 2006, I attended state-sponsored celebrations as well as holiday events at religious establishments, children's daycares and schools, and observed the social, familial watching of televised holiday programs. I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork in Almaty, the cosmopolitan former capital of Kazakhstan, with shorter stints in Kazakh areas of China and Mongolia.

National and transnational ideologies and networks are intricately involved in musical celebrations in Kazakhstan and the Kazakhstani diaspora. My work examines how the state navigates between Kazakh nationalism and multiethnic harmony, a precarious balance that President Nazarbayev has thus far has maintained fairly well, and how this managing of diversity dovetails with other important large-scale ideologies like Islam and globalism. In particular, I observe the use of calendars, zodiacs and habits of celebration as tools and reflections of nation building. In Central Asian New Year (Nauryz), for example, I look at the state's effort to strengthen Kazakh nationhood, on the one hand, and the adherence to alternate identities on the other.

The cosmopolitan nature of Almaty, where I conducted the bulk of my research, is reflected in celebrations such as Purim in the Almaty synagogue and Easter in a Korean church, both of which involve complicated, transnational networks of funding and religious leadership. In dramatic, musical, and dance performances staged during these holidays, conflicting narratives from home and abroad bring to life the concurrent, overlapping ideologies at play in such celebrations.

Because I wanted this study to look both forward and back, I examine how both Soviet legacy and post-Soviet developments (particularly transnational religious, diasporic and business networks) have informed nationality policy, holiday celebrations and public cultural formations. My work on Kazakhstani celebrations of May 9 (Victory Day, WWII) is particularly revealing of the lasting import of the Soviet legacy. Interviews reflect ambiguous and contrasting opinions on Kazakhstan's involvement in WWII, and the ubiquitous May 9 performances of romantic Soviet war songs reveal lasting loyalty to and nostalgia for the Soviet past.

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## Notes on Transliterations

For Russian words, I use the American Library Association-Library of Congress (ALA-LC) system, without the eliding symbols; thus I use ia for я and iu for ю.

For Kazakh I use a modified ALA-LC transliteration system (see appendix for full table), notably using [ü] for [ү] and [ö] for [ө], instead of the less recognizable ALA-LC symbols for these letters. I make exceptions for proper names with officially recognized transliterations, notably Kazakhstan (instead of Qazaqstan) and the names of well-known figures like Kurmangazy and Korkyt (instead of Qurmangazy and Qorqyt).

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **IDEOLOGIES IN MOTION**

#### **Globalism, Nationalism, Eurasianism, and the Soviet Legacy**

As an ethnomusicologist specializing in Central Asia, I work in an area that is inherently multidisciplinary, bridging anthropology, expressive culture, communications, and Central Asian studies. My geographic concentration is similarly complex, located at the crossroads of the settled oasis civilizations of Central Asia and traditionally nomadic Inner Asia, and wedged between the ideological, cultural, and historical influences of China and Soviet/Imperial Russia. My scholarship therefore takes into account a constellation of ideological forces at work in the region, including socialism, nationalism, globalism, and a rising regional ideology known as Eurasianism. My dissertation, a study of the political aspects of entertainment and habits of celebration surrounding post-Soviet Kazakhstani holidays, examines the interplay between these large-scale ideologies and their articulation in expressive culture.

I came to this project with a background in Russian and Chinese popular culture and ideology, after writing my Master's thesis comparing Chinese and Soviet nationality policies and their impact on the performing arts. Having witnessed Chinese and Soviet holidays while studying in Moscow and later working in Sichuan Province, I was familiar with the "Friendship of the Peoples" model of internal ethnic relations that these state celebrations so colorfully displayed. When I first began my fieldwork in Kazakhstan I was interested in elucidating how the Kazakhstani government positions itself as a forward-looking, young nation, while maintaining many core ideas from the Soviet era. From this basic concept, sometime in the middle of my fieldwork I began trying to pull together the relationships between the important large-scale ideologies: nationalism, Islam, Eurasianism, globalism, and Soviet-style

internationalism. Because I wanted this study to look both forward and back, I tried to address how both the Soviet legacy and post-Soviet developments (particularly transnational religious, diasporic, and business networks) have informed nationality policy, holiday celebrations, and public cultural formations in Kazakhstan. As I investigated how the state navigates the slippery path between Kazakh nationalism and multiethnic harmony, a precarious balance that Kazakhstan thus far has maintained fairly well since gaining independence in 1991, I began to understand that this internal political dynamic mirrors a larger backdrop, the building of a Kazakhstani state ideology that articulates with globalism, Eurasianism, and—to some extent—Islam.

### **Fieldwork Sites, Methodology, and Ethnographic Approaches**

During my two-year ethnographic study of holiday celebrations and expressive culture in Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and China between 2004 and 2006, I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork in Almaty, the former capital and currently largest city in Kazakhstan. I also spent time in southern Kazakhstan (Shimkent, Kyzylorda, and surrounding pilgrimage areas) and Bayan Olgi, an ethnic Kazakh area of western Mongolia, and Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang Province in northwest China whose population includes many Kazakhs, Uygurs, and other Turkic Muslims. My research in Mongolia and China has contributed to my understanding of Kazakh diasporic relations, while my work in Almaty encompasses many different ethnic groups in this cosmopolitan city.

I attended many state-sponsored, open-air celebrations, as well as semi-public and private events at religious establishments, schools, and in private homes. Because I conducted my Kazakhstani fieldwork with my three-year-old daughter in tow I was exposed to the public education system, which enhanced my understanding of how large-scale ideologies are

transmitted through educational institutions. Classroom skits, recitals, and concerts, therefore, also became an important part of the material that informs my dissertation. While I originally concentrated on live music performances and holiday celebrations, I later saw the importance and relevance of television, and thus incorporated televised films, concerts, music videos, made-for-TV movies, and other such programming into my fieldwork.

In thinking about how to incorporate the abstract experience of media and technology into the study of face-to-face contact within holiday performances, I came to consider the everyday experience of the holiday cycle as key. I include in my ethnographic analysis a wide range of sources from everyday Kazakhstani life: banners passed on the street, articles in the newspapers and tabloids, private family celebrations at home, the celebratory stashed bottle in the workplace, movies and late-night music videos viewed on television. All of this passes as a moving tableau, and so the visual culture of the streets, the habits and practices of work and home, internet communications and activities, and the seasonal television programming all become part of the holiday experience, a montage of mediated and face-to-face experiences which is deeply embedded in and affected by both nationalism and globalism.

John Durham Peters calls for a similarly wide, or as he puts it, “bifocal” ethnography, at once up-close and far-reaching (Peters 2007). He advocates a highly detailed local focus while simultaneously attending to the abstracted experience of increasing globalism, including the effects of transnational media, advertising, and the global economy. In the same vein, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson describe how “the global circulation of capital, signs, bodies, and commodities actively configures the experience of locality” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:9). My approach differs in that I think of this circulation not as a one-way trajectory constructing the local, but rather as a multi-directional process, whereby the local, the national, and the global are

all mutually constitutive. Following the broad-based work of scholars and theorists like Peters, Gupta, Ferguson, and Paul James, I have undertaken an ethnography of holidays that looks both at national and transnational phenomena, at the embodied and emplaced as well as the abstract, and understand them as overlapping and simultaneous phenomena acting on and through lived experience.

### **Postsocialist Scholarship**

Scholars of postsocialism have written extensively about the postsocialist condition and the common issues brought on by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Scholars of the transition and beyond have written about land privatization (Fondahl 1998; Pine 1994; Verdery 2003) gender (Attwood 2010; Buckley 1997; Pine 1994; Phillips 2008; Pilkington 1996), changes in working conditions, the labor force, and the very concept of work (Ashwin 1999; Grant 1995), and nation-building (Akiner 1995; J. Anderson 1997; Bremmer and Taras 1993; Roi 2000; Suny 2001). As scholars struggled to understand the rapid changes in postsocialist states, one angle that postsocialist scholars used to address these changes was the attention to everyday life. Nancy Ries's seminal book about everyday conversation in Russia, *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* (Ries 1997), Bruce Grant's work on the life of factory workers and fishermen in the Russian Far East (Grant 1995), Alexia Bloch's *Red Scarves and Residential Schools: Indigenous Siberians in a Post-Soviet State* (Bloch 2004), and other postsocialist works all examine the reality of regime change through the lens of the everyday.

While some of the major themes taken up in postsocialist and transition studies—gender, work, land privatization—do not figure prominently in this dissertation, my work shares with some of the above scholars the attention to everyday experience in the analysis of ideological change. Two scholars in particular, Svetlana Boym and Caroline Humphrey, influenced my

framing of the conditions I encountered in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Like Humphrey, I examine how rural lifeways meet the realities of city life, and how romanticism for the rural articulates with nationalist tropes and cosmopolitan sensibilities (a theme that Boym also addresses). Svetlana Boym's work affected my own in several ways: first, in her well-known treatment of nostalgia; and perhaps more profoundly, through her less celebrated but ongoing engagement with the life of public spaces in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts. In all three of her influential monographs, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (1994) *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), and her latest work, *Another Freedom: The Alternative History of an Idea* (2010), she delves into the changing cultural, social, and political life of public art and public space. It was after reading *The Future of Nostalgia* that I began framing this project, still in its infancy, in terms of public experience.

In my treatment of cosmopolitanism, I have built upon Boym's discussion of modernism and nationalism, particularly her discussion of the nostalgic person who emotionally internalizes the division between "local" and "universal" (Boym 2001:12).

What is crucial is that nostalgia was not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into "local" and universal" possible. The nostalgic creature has internalized this division, but instead of aspiring for the universal and the progressive he looks backward and yearn for the particular. (Boym 2001:11)

Her later description of the nostalgic as a "displaced person who mediates between the local and the universal" (Boym 2001:12) resembles my description of an Almaty cosmopolitan—someone who looks at his native locality with a nostalgic glance, not of it, but also not entirely divorced from it, a person who mediates and enables the cosmopolitan nationalist romanticized picture of the Kazakh nomadic past. Boym also examines nostalgia's role in nationalism and nation-building and describes its unique usefulness in political strategy: "Nostalgia works as a double-

edged sword: it seems to be an emotional antidote to politics, and thus remains the best political tool” (Boym 2001:58).

While I recognize my work as growing out of postsocialist scholarship, I look at subjects that do not deal directly with the jagged edges of the transition, but which perhaps represent a later stage, a Kazakhstan which has absorbed the long lasting tremors of 9/11 and its aftermath, the War on Terror, as well as the various color revolutions, the recent ethnic violence at its doorstep (Urumqi, July 2009; Bishkek in March 2005; Osh, June 2010), and the global economic crisis of the late 2000s. So much has happened in the past decade that I wonder if it is valid to treat the region largely in terms of postsocialism. Postsocialism, for me, is largely about the new pressures of living in a society that has abandoned socialism for capitalism. As such, postsocialism is premised upon binaries set up in the Cold War, which pivot around Russia and the U.S. However, in the last few years, there has been a reconfiguration of power centers and alliances, and a shift in the reigning ideologies. For Kazakhstan, recent economic, political, and ideological engagements with China and the Muslim states of the Middle East place it in quite a different position than the European postsocialist states, as Kazakhstan seeks to solidify ties with its fellow Muslims and to arrange a relationship with China that is both politically and economically beneficial.

### **Ethnomusicological Scholarship**

My work also builds upon the burgeoning number of ethnomusicological studies on nationalism in the Soviet and post-Soviet sphere. The dissolution of the Soviet Union provided fertile ground for ethnomusicological scholarship on nationalism, musical nation-building, and the transition (Buchanan 2006; Djumaev 1993; Frolova-Walker 1998; Levin 1993, 1996; Slobin 1996; Sugarman 1999). I have also been influenced by the work of scholars like Steven Feld,

Keith Basso, and Deborah Wong in my use of space/place framing, particularly in addressing music and cosmology (Basso 1996; Basso and Feld 1996; Feld 1982; Wong 2001). Finally, I see this study as part of a fairly recent body of work in ethnomusicology that uses approaches from communications and media studies to study music in conjunction with other media, particularly cinema and television (Donnelly 2001; Juluri 2003; Slobin 2008). Indeed, scholars seeking to expand the ethnography-based approach to the discipline have engaged in a heated debate on the Society for Ethnomusicology listserv about the renaming the discipline “music studies” or even “sound studies.”

### **Ideologies: A Theoretical and Contextual Discussion**

In order to make sense of the following chapters, which look at cultural production in a one-year cycle, I will need to present an overview of various overlapping and nested ideologies at work in the region. This ideological background will provide the basis for understanding how ideology manifests itself in an everyday, cultural context in Kazakhstan. These ideologies include: globalism, nationalism, Soviet-style internationalism or “Friendship of the Peoples,” Eurasianism, Islam, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism. I look at the interrelations between these “isms” as well as their articulation with postsocialist nation-building.

#### ***Defining Terms***

As there has been a great deal of dissent on the use of the terms global, globalization, globalism, transnational(ism), and nationalism, I will briefly define my use of these terms. 1. *Ethnicity and nationalism.* An *ethnic group* is a group of people bound together by the *belief* in one or more common elements; most often these common elements are: language, kinship, cultural formations, and/or homeland or territory of “origin.” A *nation* is an ethnic group with aspirations to self-rule. When speaking of the Soviet Union, I also use the Soviet term *nationality*



to refer to officially defined ethnic groups within the Soviet/former Soviet territory. While this may be somewhat confusing at first to non-specialists, it is a standard term used by Sovietologists, and is furthermore historically appropriate as it references important Soviet policies regarding its population. 2. *Globalism, globalization, and the transnational*. Globalism is an ideology that aims for interconnectedness (economically, culturally, politically) across the globe. Globalization is the process of this interconnectedness, which assumes that the “global” capitalist system is *already* global, i.e., already touches every part of the globe. The term “globalization” is therefore problematic as it renders invisible parts of the world and the world’s populations outside of this system, and smoothes over the uneven and power-based access involved in this process. Thomas Turino and other scholars hold that the term globalization is therefore self-perpetuating, its use turning idea into reality. Aihwa Ong opts for the term transnational instead of global. I generally follow this use and avoid using the terms globalization and global unless referring to the views of others; I do however feel comfortable using “globalism,” as it defines an ideology, not a reality. 3. *Kazakh and Kazakhstani*. I use Kazakhstani to refer to the entire population and/or state of Kazakhstan. The term Kazakh refers only to ethnic Kazakhs, both in Kazakhstan and in the diaspora, and does not apply to the entire multiethnic population of Kazakhstan.

### ***Globalism and Nationalism***

My work incorporates the theories of Paul James, who discusses a model for understanding the concurrence and interdependence of nationalism and globalism. Taking a broad historical perspective, his work addresses the processual similarities and temporal overlap between these two phenomena, which are often seen as fundamentally oppositional and of disparate eras (modern and postmodern respectively). He does not consider globalism as an

exclusively postmodern ideology but rather takes the long view. He looks at long processes of development and considers early forms of transregional expansion—like Genghis Khan’s conquest of much of Eurasia and the extensive networks of the Silk Road—as nascent forms of globalization. He sees the nation-state and globalism as developing in tandem:

It is no coincidence that both the modern nation-state and disembodied globalism grew up together in the late-nineteenth century. Changes in the modes of communication and exchange contributed to both formations, just as the consolidation of nations and states contributed to enhancing the new media of exchange and communication. (James 2006:137)

Like James, I see nationalism and globalism as historically overlapping and similar in their workings. One of the aspects of their development that James emphasizes, and that I highlight in my dissertation, is the reconstitution of time and space and the wielding of power that this involves. Both nationalism and what James calls the “take-off phase” of globalism (late nineteenth century) involve an understanding of “space-as-territory” and “time-as-history” (James 2006:175) that is still hugely influential in how we live our lives today. The power to define linear time and mapped space is fully implicated in the development of the modern system of nation-states. But, increasingly, the experience of emplacement and embodiment (experience lived *through* the body and *in* a place) is overlaid with the ever more abstract modes of production, communication, exchange, and knowledge. While the central tropes of *body* and *land* persist in current nationalist movements (as seen in the systematic use of rape as a tool of war in Bosnia and the Congo), nation-building is increasingly reliant on the abstractions of global finance, media, and communications. Nationalism, with its imagined bloodlines and homelands, is at once rooted in the land and in the body, and at the same time enmeshed in the transnational networks of media and digital technology.

At the same time, globalism, and its attendant transnational networks and exchanges, are rooted in the physical realities of geographic distance and human relationships. I use Anna Lowenhaupt-Tsing's concept of "friction" or "stickiness" to illustrate the grip of the *local* and *tangible* in what is often described as a frictionless process of globalization (cf. the term "global flows"). Lowenhaupt-Tsing contends:

Capitalism, science, and politics all depend on global connections. Each spreads through aspirations to fulfill *universal* dreams and schemes. Yet this is a particular kind of universality: It can only be charged and enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters. (Lowenhaupt-Tsing 2005:1)

Further, I acknowledge the influence of scholars like Aihwa Ong, who recognizes the inherent power imbalance in globalization. Ong, writing about Arjun Appadurai's groundbreaking work on what has been called "cultural globalization," criticizes Appadurai for ignoring power differences between mobile and nonmobile populations. She contends that a great segment of the world's population is able to access neither the mobility nor the technology that is key to his definition of globalization. Thus, while an emerging global elite, interconnected in various ways, is amassing great wealth, a large part of the world's population is left out of this process—a dynamic I encounter every day in cosmopolitan Almaty. Finally, Ong's flexible concept of national belonging and identification fits the work of a new generation of diaspora and border scholars like myself who reach beyond the First World/Third World, West/East dualism prevalent in early border studies scholarship (Appadurai 1996; Ong 1999).

My study of nationalism and globalism has contributed a core base for my treatment of ideology in Kazakhstan. President Nazarbaev's policies incorporate both national and transnational trajectories. On the one hand, a "Kazakhization" of the state apparatus can be seen at every level of government since independence, and mandatory Kazakh language policies instituted in schools, media, and government bodies; on the other hand, the state continues to

brand itself as a interconfessional, multiethnic, tolerant country which is striving to position itself as a key diplomatic mediator between East and West. Interestingly, the national drive to increase the Kazakh population has encouraged the expansion of transnational networks as the Kazakhstani state continues to encourage immigration of Kazakhs from abroad.

### *Cosmopolitanism*

Cosmopolitanism has been described as “openness” to other cultures, or a “facility” in multiple cultural formations (Turino 2000; Hall 2002). In my experience, cosmopolitans exhibit a curiosity for, a facility and or frequent contact with ideas, sensibilities, fashions, and languages outside of their own culture. Many acquaintances that I would describe as cosmopolitan are talented in foreign languages; through the learning of these languages they become curious about other cultures. While this kind of person may have grown up in a rural setting with little contact with foreigners and foreign ideas, their curiosity about the world has led them to a cosmopolitan way of thinking and living. Others are part of an elite “jet setting” group, often urban, connected to the internet and transnational media (foreign television, music videos, YouTube and social networks like Facebook, and the Russian version mail.ru), and interested in transnational trends or ideologies (whether in the realm of fashion, music, philosophy, political science, or international relations). The latter are often educated in English-speaking high schools or universities, and may have some training abroad. Regardless of how they came to it, cosmopolitans adopt a facility and sensibility for multiple cultural formations.

Throughout this dissertation I examine how globalism articulates with cosmopolitanism; indeed, as in my discussion of cosmopolitan Almaty teens, these two processes often operate together (see chapters four and five). However, there are good reasons for discussing these terms separately. Woodward’s treatment of cosmopolitanism deals well with this issue, precisely

because he treats the two terms separately before discussing their points of congruence. For our purposes, his discussion of political and cultural cosmopolitanism is most relevant:

At its most macro level cosmopolitanism refers to an ambition or project of supra-national state building, including regimes of global governance, and legal-institutional frameworks for regulating events and processes which incorporate, but have impacts, beyond any one nation. At a political level, cosmopolitanism refers to a position or principle, emphasizing hybridity, multiplicity, inclusivity and acknowledgement of diverse cultural forms and expressions. Finally, as a cultural phenomenon—and there appears to be a high degree of agreement on this point in the literature—cosmopolitanism is defined by an openness to other cultures, values and experiences. Such a cultural outlook is identified as underpinned by new types of mobilities of capital, people and things (Beck 2006; Hannerz 1990; Szerszynski and Urry 2002, 2006); elaborated, flexible and heterogeneous outlooks and modes of corporeal ‘code-switching’ capacity (Bernstein 1972; Chaney 2002; Côté 1996; Emmison 2003; Hall 2002; Waldron 1992), and an expanded, inclusive ethical core emphasizing worldliness and communitarianism (Hannerz 1990; Nussbaum 1994; Tomlinson 1999). (Woodward, et al. 2008:208-09)

Woodward’s treatment of cosmopolitanism deconstructs the multiplicity of the term on several levels: first, on the level of scale, cosmopolitanism can apply to a local, national, or a supra-national level; second, it can reflect political ambitions and aims, like the international inclinations of Kazakhstani state-building, or cultural aspects of society, like that of Almaty’s diverse populace. Woodward’s description aptly describes the nested ideologies at work in Kazakhstani ideology and cultural production, and the ways in which cosmopolitanism is present at these different levels and in multiple spheres of discourse.

### ***Nation and Empire***

Historians who have explored the trajectories of nation and empire in the context of Soviet history (Hirsch 2005; Martin 2001; Michaels 2003; Northrop 2004; Slezkine 1994) and the reconstruction of national history (Diener 2002; Schatz 2004) identify patterns of empire that reproduce themselves in post-Soviet regimes. The legacy of the Soviet Union strongly influences

the current domestic policies governing Kazakhstan's diverse population, and provides a ghostly template for the establishment of the new alignment of states in this part of the world.

Further, patterns of Soviet cultural production are not merely fading remnants from a past regime, but, having been adopted by the post-Soviet states and institutions, are active agents in the continuing production and reproduction of cultural forms of expression. The tools of empire, or “technologies of rule” that Hirsch (2005) discusses in her seminal work—the census, the map, and the museum—have become the tools of Kazakhstani nation-building, a process of which music, and expressive culture in general, constitute an integral part.

### ***The National Question and the Friendship of the Peoples***

The National Question refers to the Soviet policies regarding minority groups (or minority nationalities as they are generally referred to in Soviet scholarship). Though the policies toward non-Russians varied through Soviet history, the general tendency was to allow, and even encourage “harmless” displays of national pride (i.e., through dress, cuisine, and festival music) while simultaneously discouraging any nationalist activity that smacked of separatism. Each person must be identified with an officially sanctioned nationality, which was recorded in internal passports and identification cards. The “Friendship of the Peoples” essentially celebrated the unique characteristics of each nationality—often in revue-like music festivals—and emphasized cultural difference while stressing equality harmony. At the same time, the ultimate goal was the eventual erasure of national difference and the subsuming of various identities under the most important and essential identity in the Soviet way of thinking—that of the worker. My work examines how the Soviet tools of empire, particularly the Soviet nationality policies, have been adopted as a way of managing ethnic diversity that not only replicates Soviet patterns but also dovetails with Eurasianist ideology.

### ***Eurasianism***

Though not well known in the West, Eurasianism has a long history in the region and is currently gaining prominence and political importance, particularly in Russia and Kazakhstan. While there are several intellectual strands of Eurasianism, the most salient for our purposes is that of Soviet scholar Lev Gumilev (1912–1992),<sup>1</sup> who envisioned a utopian steppe alliance between Turkic and Slavic peoples—an alliance that is historically and geographically predetermined and naturalized, and claims Eurasia as the historic homeland of both peoples. According to Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis, humans are deeply affected by the territory they inhabit; an ethnic group, or *ethnos*, may be warlike, peaceful, or industrious, depending on their geographical surroundings (see Gumilev 1978). Terrain, climate, and natural resources dictate what kind of lifeway an *ethnos* may pursue and succeed at (e.g., fishing, hunting, agriculture, trade, military expansion), which in turn affects the group’s sociocultural makeup. He argues that the natural proclivities of Turkic and Slavic people, while inherently different, are mutually complementary and that both can thrive from such a union. Drawing on these concepts, Nazarbaev’s Eurasianism places Kazakhstan as an intermediary between East and West. His Eurasianism at once promotes interethnic harmony between Kazakhs (Turks) and Russians (Slavs) and simultaneously implies cooperation between Russia and the Central Asian states.

Both Nazarbaev and Putin are self-declared Eurasianists, engaging with the theories of Neo-Eurasianists, the most prominent of whom is Alexander Dugin, a media savvy Russian

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<sup>1</sup> The son of poets Anna Akhmatova and Nikolai Gumilev, Lev Gumilev concentrated his early scholarly studies on ancient Turks and geography. His many books on ancient Turkic and Slavic peoples, including *Ancient Turks* and *Ancient Russia and the Great Steppe*, constitute a major contribution to this area of Soviet scholarship.

philosopher and nationalist who maintains an active website and has written several books about Eurasianism, including a book on Nazarbaev (Dugin 2004). Though Putin has distanced himself from Dugin somewhat because of his overly nationalistic bent, when Putin was president he pronounced Eurasianism to be Russia's guiding ideology. Nazarbaev is similarly vocal about his Eurasianist inclinations, and named his new flagship university in Astana the Lev Gumilev Eurasian University.

Dugin and other current Eurasianists, among them Kazakh political theorist Nurlan Amrekulov, envision in Eurasia a second pole of power to balance U.S. political, ideological, economic and military dominance—an ideology with teeth as witnessed by the recent acceleration in the formation of transregional partnerships in Eurasia. Dugin sees the rise of a bipolar world order in which a land-based, continental, territorialist power in Eurasia balances the maritime, commercial, capitalist power he calls Atlanticism, which correlates roughly to American-European driven globalism. Eurasianism meshes well with domestic and foreign policy both in Kazakhstan and in Russia. In Russia, it is used to legitimate a continuation of domination in the region that was formerly the Soviet Union. Under Eurasianism, Russia can promote itself as a powerful *partner* with the Central Asian republics. Where Russian dominance in Central Asia has colonial and Soviet precedence, Eurasianism is strangely forward leaning, utopic, and hopeful, while also drawing from a mythologized Slavic-Turkic partnership in the distant past. Eurasianism thus takes a giant leap over the messy colonial and Soviet history, and forms a bridge from the pre-industrial to the post-national.

In a way Eurasianism currently serves as a replacement for the ideology of Soviet socialism, as a way to unify the post-Soviet states in Eurasia and project this partnership into the future. Eurasianism has much in common with Soviet socialism; it performs that special Soviet



sleight of hand: promoting a transnational utopian vision while simultaneously following a nationalist policy that maintains centralized power. Furthermore, Eurasianism is easily blurred with Kazakh nationalism because Eurasianism (particularly as promoted by Gumilev) glorifies Turkic-speaking nomads. Stressing mobility as a distinct advantage on the open steppes of Eurasia (particularly in military and trade), Gumilev wrote that Turkic nomads are the natural leaders in that region, and that a partnership with them was essential to the survival of the forest-dwelling Slavs (Russians). Thus, Eurasianism, like Kazakh nationalism, looks to the nomadic past as one of its central myths, while emphasizing a partnership between Slavs and Turkic peoples as the naturalized and historical leaders of Eurasia. Stressing both diversity and centralized power while glorifying a nomadic Eurasian past, Eurasianism becomes a platform that legitimizes both Kazakh nationalism and a continuation of a Soviet-style nationalities policy.

### ***Nested Ideologies***

The nesting of ideologies to which I have referred throughout this chapter is prevalent in a number of holiday celebrations, reflected in banners, billboards, and set decorations. During the 2005 Unity of Nations Day celebration in Almaty, for example, to the right of the main stage stood a high sculpture depicting a pair of uplifted hands holding a globe. Facing outward was the continental mass of Eurasia, within which was the country of Kazakhstan, highlighted in blue, and Astana marked as its capital. In this image, Kazakhstan represents a microcosm of Eurasia and a microcosm of the globe, nesting (and thereby legitimizing) Kazakhstani nationalities policy within Eurasianism, which in turn is legitimated by globalist internationalism. At each level, there is a promise of inclusiveness and tolerance; but this promise is paired with a clear indication of the center of power. And while Eurasianism (at least as it is promoted in Kazakhstan) touts inclusiveness extending as far as Mongolia and Pakistan, it regards the

partnership between Kazakhstan and Russia as the seat of power. Within Kazakhstan, the nationalities policy claims inclusiveness and tolerance for all peoples, religions, and languages within its borders, but Kazakhs are the dominant power, just as Russians were in the Soviet Union.

The next innermost layer of this geographical and ideological nesting is Astana, the new Kazakhstani capital at the “heart of Eurasia.”<sup>2</sup> By describing his new capital as “the heart of Eurasia,” Nazarbaev places it at the center of this pole of power (paired with Moscow). Thus the new seat of Kazakhstani power is driven by momentum that extends far beyond Kazakhstan, implying a broad regional reach. In doing so, Nazarbaev also marginalizes the old capital Almaty along with the old power structure and the old clan families that maintained power in the Soviet era. Astana thus becomes the twin power center (with Moscow) of a new Eurasian era, leaving behind the colonial and Soviet baggage that a partnership with Russia might otherwise carry.

These ideologies are mapped onto the globe in concentric rings of power. The defining of space and time is manipulated to suit ideology, a phenomenon that articulates with James’ treatment of inclusion and exclusion. In this discussion he describes an advertisement for Toyota in which the meaning of “we” continually changes in the voice over. James writes:

In Cambodia, the “Japanese” car company Toyota ran a campaign under the banner headline “This is Our Town.” To the backdrop of a photo of planet earth spinning in space, the patronizing copy speaks with postcolonial sophistication of the mutuality of the global project, all the while slipping between different meanings of the “local” and different meanings of the “we”:

“It’s the global village. We live here. You do too. We’re neighbors. And since we’re neighbors, we should be friends. It seems that we are all of us—everywhere—slowly coming to this realization. But how do we do it? In a practical sense what steps do we take? We can’t speak for others but for ourselves we can say this: we will do our part to bring the world together by building up the global auto industry. . . . For the first half of the century we thought of ourselves

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<sup>2</sup> See Nazarbaev’s book by this title, about Kazakhstan’s new capital, Astana.

as a Japanese company. . . . Now we think of ourselves as a world company. Our responsibility is to everyone.” (James 2006:15)

In the ideological nesting I describe, there is a similar slippage, with “we” alternately signifying: “humankind,” which maps onto the entire globe; “we” the Turks and Slavs, who (according to Eurasianist theory) are the sovereign people of Eurasia; and “we” the people of Kazakhstan. “We” also goes back and forward in time—so that the new “we” of Eurasia replaces the “we” of the Soviet Union, allowing for a continued cultural, political, and ideological link between states of the CIS, while conveniently dropping the baggage that goes along with the tag “Soviet.” As I will discuss in subsequent chapters, advertisers and policy-makers alike tinker with the malleable meaning of “we,” shifting its meaning according to ideological, political, and geographic context.

### ***Islam, Eurasianism, and Diplomacy***

The articulation between Islam and Eurasianism, particularly the implications for managing Orthodox and Muslims populations, is key to Kazakhstani domestic and internal politics. The nature of this articulation has long been a matter of regional scholarly debate. While for some scholars, the alliance between the Orthodox and Muslims populations is the most important aspect of Eurasianist doctrine, others advocate transnational Islam as an important factor. In the latter camp, Abdul-Vakhid Niazov, an ethnic Russian who converted to Islam, argues that transnational Muslim alliances are key to the Eurasian balance, placing Muslim partners on an equal footing with Orthodox Russians (in contrast to the big brother–little brother power imbalance favoring Russians that is promoted by Dugin) (Shlapentokh 2008).

Like Niazov, Nazarbaev has also begun to emphasize transnational networks throughout the Muslim world. For Nazarbaev, what is stressed is not Islam per se, but the strengthening of ties with other Muslim countries for economic gain and for greater control over trade and

industry, particularly the oil industry. The *Dinar Standard*, an online business newspaper for OIC<sup>3</sup> countries, ran an article on Nazarbaev's 2006 state-of-the-nation address. According to the author, in his address, Nazarbaev stated as his major goal, "the growth and global integration of his nation." The article continues:

President Nursultan Nazarbayev's 2006 national strategy has galvanized an already booming economy . . . . This included strengthening economic bonds with the Muslim world—presenting a wide array of investment and joint venture opportunities . . . . President Nazarbayev also signaled the belief that fostering strong regional cooperation is the key to the realization of the country's ambitious goals. While he laid out specific focus on the relationship with Russia and China amongst other countries, he also addressed building stronger ties with the Muslim world.

"Kazakhstan's active participation in the structure of the international cooperation and cultural exchange with the Islamic states is quite natural. The country expands mutual benefit and mutual enriching ties with the majority of Islamic countries as well," President Nazarbayev said. (Shikoh 2006)

Where Eurasianism forms a network ostensibly based on the utopic vision of a steppe union but also held together through the shared Soviet experience, organizations like the OIC involve Kazakhstan in yet another transnational network based on ideology (Islam) with practical applications for the distribution of power. In the chapters ahead I will show how Nazarbaev navigates these different networks and how he purveys disparate ideologies in his speeches and public events.

### ***Nationalism in a Transnational Context: Diaspora and Kazakh Oralmandar***

In Kazakh, the term *oralman* (pl. *oralmandar*) means "returnee" and refers to those Kazakhs who were born abroad, in the Kazakh diaspora, and have "returned" to Kazakhstan. The idea behind Kazakh "returnees" is that they are returning to their "homeland." The irony of this designation is that returnees have been separated from Kazakhstan for several generations—

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<sup>3</sup> The Organization of the Islamic Conference, of which Kazakhstan is a member, is an organization of Muslim countries with loose financial and political ties.

indeed, in the case of some Mongolian Kazakhs for over two centuries—and many feel anything but “at home” in Kazakhstan. In many cases, their lack of Russian language inhibits them from becoming truly integrated into Kazakhstani society and often limits employment opportunities. In the case of Kazakhs from Xinjiang, an adjacent region of northwest China that lies just over the Tian Shan Mountains from Kazakhstan, I have heard them described by Kazakhstanis as “too Chinese” in manner, language, and culture. Thus, while the Kazakhstani state has for over a decade implemented policies intended to woo Kazakh *oralmandar* back to Kazakhstan in an effort to boost its Kazakh population, the people involved in these movements have not necessarily been absorbed seamlessly into the local Kazakh population; rather they have formed their own communities within Kazakhstan, and maintained their own identity as *oralman* Kazakhs.

### **Dissertation Structure**

My dissertation is organized calendrically and theoretically, each chapter taking up a specific theoretical point in conjunction with a constellation of holidays. After the first two chapters, which provide historical, musical, and theoretical background, each individual chapter is designed to elaborate one aspect of nation-building, as conveyed by music and other media, by addressing other influences acting on this process in Kazakhstan. Thus, chapter three discusses the concept of *Druzhba Narodov* or “Friendship of the Peoples,” which underpinned Soviet nationality policy and continues to inform state policy in contemporary Kazakhstan. Chapter four discusses the use of calendars and maps as tools of nation-building. In particular, I observe how the calendar year is marked, through official and unofficial channels, and the ways in which seasonality is reflected and constructed in winter holidays. Chapter five observes the state’s efforts to strengthen Kazakh nationhood in the context of Nauryz celebrations. Chapter six

examines transnational networks involved in holidays, particularly Passover and Easter, and how institutional transnationalism articulates with cosmopolitanism on a personal level. Chapter seven discusses May 9, a major holiday in Russia, Kazakhstan, and other CIS<sup>4</sup> states commemorating victory in WWII. It elaborates on the connections between the Soviet legacy and current Eurasianist politics, and observes the role of mediated narratives in converting individual testimony into collective memory and subsequently into national history. Chapter eight addresses Islam in two parts: the first concerns state approaches to Islam and addresses its use as a diplomatic tool, as a basis of Kazakh nationalism, and as a source for moral governing; the second examines the personal and embodied nature of shrine-based Islam and religious healing.

### **Summary**

The above discussions demonstrate how transnational ideologies like Eurasianism and Islam are intermeshed with nationalism in the nation-building policies of Russia, Kazakhstan, and China. Nested ideologies place nationalism within a larger context, power is remapped onto the globe, and time is reconfigured in new histories and calendars to suit these ideologies. The language of inclusion and exclusion is the hammer and nail of nation-building, and nested ideologies help to blur who exactly is the “we” included in the politics of national and regional identity. Further, a global “we” erects a façade of inclusion and equality, while the image-purveyors maintain power over both communication and exclusion. James writes that

The reconstitution of time and space has political consequences, with more abstract means of connecting time and space giving increased potential for power at a distance. As the dominant way in which we live time and space has become more abstract, it has become more open to processes of rationalization, objectification and commodification. Thus the way that power is generated has

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<sup>4</sup> The Commonwealth of Independent States is a loose association of many of the former Soviet States, established in 1991 during the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

itself become (potentially) more extensive in its reach and intensive in its depth, as it has become more abstractedly constituted. (James 2006:176)

The modern tools of empire—the making of museum exhibits, history books, and maps—have been much discussed by scholars like Douglas Northrop and Francine Hirsch, who have looked at how the Russian and then Soviet Empire extended its reach into Inner and Central Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. My dissertation examines the tools of empire of this century: the use of advertising and transnational media in transmitting large-scale ideologies and aiding nation-building. My concern for these ideologies is precisely the dangers that James expresses—the increased possibilities for the wielding of power over vast spaces with the ever more abstract use of communications.

At the same time, this study underscores the continued importance of place and “the local” within an increasingly abstracted world. Ferguson writes,

The partial erosion of spatially bounded social worlds and the growing role of the imagination of places from a distance, however, themselves must be situated within the highly spatialized terms of a global capitalist economy. The special challenge here is to use a focus on the way space is imagined (but not *imaginary*) as a way to explore the mechanisms through which such conceptual processes of place making meet the changing global economic and political conditions of lived spaces—the relation, we could say, between place and space . . . .

Places, after all, are always imagined in the context of political-economic determinations that have logic of their own. Territoriality is thus reinscribed at just the point it threatens to be erased. (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:39-40)

Just as place remains an important part of our daily lives despite the increasingly abstract nature of communication and production, so too the construction of “nation” remains an important part of a world that in many ways is becoming as much a map of transnational flows as of national boundaries.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MUSICAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

#### **Kazakhstan: A Brief Historical Overview**

Kazakhstan is a sparsely populated<sup>5</sup> expansive country whose characteristic terrain includes arid steppes and mountain ranges. Scant arable land and plentiful pasturelands at the mountains' foothills were ecologically determining factors in the development of Kazakh mobile pastoralism. Like its Central Asian neighbors, Kazakhstan is landlocked—actually the largest landlocked country, and the ninth largest country overall, in the world.

Kazakhs originated from a group of Turkic peoples in the Chagatai *ulus* (polity) during the Mongol Empire (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries). Around 1465, a separatist group of some 200,000 subjects, led by Zhanibek and Kirai, considered the founders of the Kazakh nation, left Transoxania (the region between the Amu and the Syr Rivers now in Uzbekistan) to push further north beyond the Syr Darya into what is now southern Kazakhstan. This separatist group, then indistinguishable from Uzbeks in their language and Turkic-Mongol ethnic makeup, became known as Kazakhs. While the soil in Transoxania was fertile enough to support the settled oasis communities that came to typify Uzbek lifeways, aridity increased further to the north, with the Qyzylqum Desert occupying the area of northern Uzbekistan and southern Kazakhstan. The separatist group that became known as Kazakhs adopted a much more nomadic lifestyle than their southern relations, relying on herding rather than agriculture for food. Eventually, it was this key difference—mobile pastoralism vs. settled oasis culture—that came to distinguish Uzbeks and Kazakhs, and one which both groups continue to identify as central to their national identity. Indeed, while the origin of the word “Kazakh” remains in dispute, some claim that

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<sup>5</sup> The estimated 2010 population of Kazakhstan is 16,310,000 (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, accessed July 5, 2011).



Kazakh actually means a “vagabond” or “rogue” people, in reference to their separatist, nomadic roots. Other scholars believe the term Kazakh to be related to the Turkish verb *qaz*, which means “to wander” (Olcott 1995:4).

Kazakhstan’s steppes and hilly plains, made up of mostly arid and alkaline soil, are well suited for pastureland and largely unsuitable for widespread cultivation (only twelve percent of Kazakhstan is cultivated). However, an area of arable land in the north is used for wheat and other grain crops. This fertile northern land was reserved for Russian settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and remains an area with heavy concentrations of ethnic Russians. Another cultivated strip, made arable by extensive irrigation, follows the Syr Darya River and the Alatau Mountains at the Kazakhstan’s southern and southeastern edge (Curtis 1998).

Several natural borders partially enclose Kazakhstan: the Caspian Sea to the west, the Syr Darya river and the Qyzylqum Desert to the south-southwest, the Alatau and Tian Shan mountains to the south and east, and the Altai mountains in the northeast. The northern border, however, is free from any natural barrier, a crucial feature in the history of Russian encroachment into the Kazakh steppe. On the eastern border with China, a break in the mountain ranges to the east forms a pass called the “Jungar Gate,” which played an important role in early Kazakh history (sixteenth century)<sup>6</sup> and functioned as a crucial escape route at numerous tumultuous points in Chinese and Soviet history, when Kazakhs fled across the mountainous borderland (in both directions) to safer pasturelands.

### ***Early Kazakh Governance: Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries***

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<sup>6</sup> In the sixteenth century, Kazakh territory extended much further east into the area across the Tian Shan mountains in what is now northwest China. In the seventeenth century this eastern territory was lost to the Jungar Mongols in what has come to be known to the Kazakhs as the Great Retreat (Olcott 1995).

Early in the sixteenth century, Kazakhs separated into three “umbrella clans” or hordes, dubbed the small horde (*kishi zhuz*), middle horde (*orta zhuz*) and large horde (*ulu zhuz*), each headed by a leader or *khan* and constituted by many smaller kinship groups called clans. While the term “Kazakh” appears as early as the sixteenth century, it was probably not used as a term of self-identification until much later; rather, clan and horde allegiances were of primary concern. Indeed, some scholars argue that this is still the case, as clan and horde identities still hold great relevance for Kazakhs and continue to significantly influence political power. Clans do not adhere to state borders; many, like *Naiman*, *Namangan*, and others, extend over wide territories in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. This political and supra/sub-national nature of clans have led scholars like Edward Schatz to contend that clan identity still holds more meaning for Kazakhs than national identity (Schatz 2004).

### ***Imperial Russia and Early Soviet Involvement***

Because of Kazakhstan’s position on the edge of the Russian Empire and bordering China, its fate has long been, and continues to be, intertwined with both. Imperial Russia made inroads into Kazakhstan in the early eighteenth century in order to maintain control over Russian trade caravans traveling through Central Asia. During the nineteenth century, Russia strengthened its military presence with a series of forts, built throughout Kazakhstan toward eastern Kazakhstan and Xinjiang (Svanberg 1999:135). Though initially Russian involvement in Kazakh territory was of a largely economic and military nature, Russian and later Soviet involvement in Kazakhstan became more invasive and influential in Kazakh cultural life.

Initially, Kazakh Muslim practices and religious schools were allowed to continue largely without interference. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, in response to the rise of a nascent Kazakh nationalist movement, Russia began to establish more control in cultural and

educational spheres. Russian literacy schools were given primacy over Islamic schools, and pilgrimages to Mecca were made more difficult. In addition, Russian rulers began to encourage the settlement of Russians in Kazakhstan by granting them large tracts of land for cultivation.<sup>7</sup> The continued settlement of Russian farmers in Kazakhstan would have disastrous consequences for Kazakh mobile pastoralists while strengthening Russian control in the region.

The early twentieth century was a time of great upheaval on the Russian-controlled Kazakh steppe. Russian policies implemented during this time led to dire conditions for Kazakhs and resultant waves of emigration into China and the Ferghana Valley. Revolutionary fervor sweeping Russia had great influence in Kazakhstan as fledgling socialist movements, Kazakh elite national movements, and Kazakh peasant rebellions intertwined in the early twentieth century. Russia's policy of deporting its dissidents to Kazakhstan in the early 1900s arguably contributed to the spread of revolutionary ideas in the area, while agrarian reforms like the Stolypin reform,<sup>8</sup> and newly established military drafts<sup>9</sup> led to further Kazakh uprisings and emigrations (J. Anderson 1997:18).

It became popular at the turn of the century for both Kazakhs in Xinjiang and Kazakhs in the Russian-controlled steppe to send their sons to Moscow to receive "enlightened" education. Many scholars have cited this trend as one of the factors contributing to the rise of Kazakh

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<sup>7</sup> The 1891 Steppe Statute stated that all land "in excess of Kazakh needs" was to be handed over to the Ministry of State Properties for redistribution. Anderson explains that, "in practice this soon meant whilst Kazakhs were permitted small amounts of land, much of the best quality land (forty percent was designated 'surplus') was given over to Russian settlers" (J. Anderson 1997:15).

<sup>8</sup> In the Stolypin agrarian reform, which took place between 1906 and 1912, 19 million hectares of steppe, previously Kazakh pastureland, were given to new Russian settlers, resulting in mass migration of Kazakhs into the Ili Valley (on the border of Kazakhstan and China) and to the Altai mountains (Benson and Svanberg 1998:61).

<sup>9</sup> A 1916 military draft that included Kazakhs (previously exempt) led to a massive uprising involving over 50,000 men throughout the Kazakh steppe and the Ferghana Valley. As punishment, Russia ordered the deportation of those who had participated in the revolt. This resulted in the emigration of about 300,000 people, mostly Kazakhs, into Xinjiang (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 63).

nationalism in Kazakhstan, because of their exposure to Western European and Russian nationalist ideas so prominent the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. One such effort, the *Alash* movement, resurfaced after the fall of the Soviet Union in newly-independent Kazakhstan.

### ***Collectivization and Sedentarization, 1930s and 1940s***

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet push to collectivize land and livestock in Central Asia (a process mirrored throughout the Soviet Union) met with disastrous consequences and massive loss of life among Soviet Kazakhs. While the devastation wrought by collectivization was not unique to Kazakhs (the centralized governing mechanism made state-run agriculture highly inefficient; inadequate harvesting, storage facilities and distribution systems led to monumental waste of foodstuffs and widespread famine), Kazakhs' experience under collectivization differed from their European counterparts in that their nomadic lifeways complicated collectivization in the region.

In 1929 the Soviets launched a twin campaign aimed at forced sedentarization and collectivization in Kazakhstan. As Kazakhs were forced to settle on pastureland that could not accommodate their livestock, great numbers of their herds starved. This, combined with the agricultural disaster wrought by land collectivization, led to mass starvation among the Kazakhs in the 1930s. While Soviet records from this time are sketchy, most scholars agree that at least 1.7 million Kazakhs, or 40 percent of the total Kazakh population, died as a direct result of collectivization, with some estimates as high as 2.5 million. Thousands more fled to Afghanistan and Xinjiang to escape Soviet control and starvation.

Added to the devastating population depletion, the changes brought to the Kazakh lifeways by forced settlement and collectivization were profound, as migratory life had been

central to Kazakh experience. Azade-Ayşe Rorlich discusses several Kazakh scholars' approach to the concept of nomadism as a defining characteristic of Kazakh identity. She writes:

Central to [philosopher Nurlat Amrekulov's and historian Nurbulat Masanov's] discussion of Kazakh identity is the nomadic marker, which determined the *mentalité* and *weltanschauung* of the inhabitants of the steppe. Analyzing the impact of forced sedentarization during the Soviet rule, they argue that "along with a nomadic way of life and culture, Kazakhs lost their pride, basic values and worldview orientations." (Amrekulov and Masanov in Rorlich 2000:263)

### ***Deportations, 1935–1944***

Over three million non-Russians were deported to Central Asia and Siberia in the lead-up to and through the course of World War II. As Joseph Stalin consolidated power and squelched opposition, one of his tactics for diffusing areas of possible dissent was forced migration. Entire communities, and sometimes entire ethnic groups, were moved from disparate parts of the Soviet Union to distant, sparsely populated areas, namely Siberia and Central Asia. Koreans from the Soviet Far East, Poles from Belarus and the Ukraine, Chechens from the Caucasus, and Germans from the Volga region, among many others, were moved in great numbers to Kazakhstan during this period. Particularly those deemed "enemy nations" (like Koreans and Germans) during World War II were targeted for forced migration (Boobbyer 2000).

### ***Almaty in the Soviet Era***

During much of the Soviet period, Kazakhstan's capital, Almaty or Alma-Ata, as it was formerly known, was a small, provincial city, while Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, was the cultural hub of Central Asia. Nevertheless, arts and music flourished in Almaty, and, as in Tashkent, an opera house, several theaters, and a conservatory were established (late 1930s–1940s). During World War II, Mosfil'm, the monumental Soviet film industry, was moved to Almaty (1941–43), marking the beginning of the Kazakhstani film industry.

Many Almatyites fondly view the 1960s and 1970s in Almaty, under the leadership of Dinmukhamed Konaev, as a golden period when theater, opera, ballet, and the Kazakh film industry flourished, as the Almaty conservatory and the Academy of Sciences supported a new generation of scholars, writers, and musicians. The fall of the Soviet Union brought an influx of foreign capital, and by beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Almaty had replaced Tashkent as the cultural center of Central Asia and a new generation of wealthy entrepreneurs and oil companies had transformed the capital into a cosmopolitan city, with soaring rents and a steeply growing gap between the wealthy and the working class.

Late twentieth-century Kazakhstan witnessed a second-wave mobilization of the Kazakh elite, echoing that of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. In the late 1980s, just prior to Kazakh independence, the Kazakh elite formed several groups, including *Azat* (Freedom), *Alash* (a re-formation of the older movement), and *Qazaq Tili* (Kazakh language). These groups protested Russian cultural, linguistic, and political hegemony and called for an independent nation-state. The Kazakh diaspora once again became a focus for these groups in an effort to establish a Kazakh majority in Kazakhstan. In addition, those seeking to strengthen Kazakh language use in Kazakhstan saw the Kazakh communities outside the Soviet Union as potentially valuable resources. Kazakh intellectual activists fully recognized the importance of the Kazakh diaspora and continued, along with the Kazakh government, to rally for their repatriation.

On December 16, 1986, the replacement of Konaev (an ethnic Kazakh) with Gennadi Kolbin (Russian/Tatar) sparked a large protest in the central square in Almaty, and the ensuing military response resulted in several deaths and arrests of youths and students. This event and its related protest movement, both now called “Zheltoksan” (December), continued to hold a revered place in Kazakhstan’s history, and exactly five years later, when the Soviet Union fell,

December 16, 1991 became the official date of Kazakhstan's independence.

### **Music in Kazakhstan**

As powerful bearers of cultural history, musicians occupy an important place in Kazakh history, mythology, cosmology, folklore, and the local practice of Islam. Indeed, upon learning of my field of study, very many Kazakhstanis offered comments about music playing an important role in Kazakh society. Clearly part of local discourse and a point of national pride, the discussion of Kazakh music places a particular emphasis on oral verbal art forms, specifically, the epic and the improvised song. The historically important epic-singer or *zhylrau* (pl. *zhylraular*), and the poet-bard or *aqyn* (pl. *aqynlar*), a master of verbal improvisation and social commentary, are much revered in Kazakhstan. As the great scholars and philosophers of Bukhara and Samarkand are to Uzbekistan, prominent *zhylraular* and *aqynlar* are held up as the gems of Kazakh cultural heritage. The *zhylrau* is believed to possess an almost superhuman ability of memory, while the *aqynlar* are valued for their razor-sharp wit, knowledge of current events, clan dynamics, and political commentary. Nomadic lifeways made these figures important repositories of history and genealogy, as well as vehicles for dispersing news and politics. Along with the khan's other advisors, such as the court astronomer, the *zhylrau* and *aqyn* were both considered holders of special knowledge and ability. Along with other kinds of musicians, these figures were generally part of the patronage system, and consequently, some of their performances contained references to their patron(s), including relevant local history and genealogy of the family in question.

While verbal arts have their areas of social prominence, the *qobyz*, a two-stringed upright fiddle, maintains a place of cosmological significance: up to the early twentieth century *qobyz* players were strongly associated with shamanism. While today it is played as any other musical

instrument, though often with some reference to its supernatural past, historically the *qobyz* was the primary instrument used by Kazakh shamans to enter a trance state. Like Siberian and Mongolian shamans, Kazakh shamans were consulted in matters of illness, madness, and magic, and could place a curse or charm on individuals as well as heal the sick and tell the future. The primary (pre-Islamic) belief system of Kazakh shamans was animism, or nature worship, which stretched across much of inner Eurasia from Central Asia to Mongolia and Siberia. The *qobyz* repertoire and playing style still bear traces of its animist roots, most prominent in pieces titled “*Kaskyr*” (Wolf) and “*Akku*” (White Swan), which include sections of animal imitations. One such example, in Ykhylas Dukenuly’s “*Kaskyr*,” begins with a rising tritone, falling off after a long held note, in imitation of a lone wolf’s howl. This is followed by a parallel melody, in imitation of two wolves. After several repetitions, there is a rapid figure played close to the bridge in the lower register, its scratchy timbre and violent motion uncannily resembling a dogfight. Much like the Tuvan sonic offerings to the nature spirits, these animal imitations within *qobyz* pieces are largely attributed to shamanic activities of early *qobyz* players and composers.

Perhaps because of the regional connections between music and shamanism, or due to the heightened powers attributed to certain types of performers, the local Muslim practice of shrine pilgrimage (i.e., visiting shrines of powerful or spiritually blessed people) includes, in startlingly high numbers, the shrines and gravesites of musicians. In subsequent chapters I will discuss pilgrimage to musician’s shrines, but it is worthwhile to describe in brief a pilgrimage just on the outskirts of Almaty. The Almaty pilgrimage circuit includes the shrines of a war hero, two *aqynlar*, a composer, a *qobyz* player, and a number of shrines connected to the family of President Nazarbaev. The shrine I found most interesting was that of Tökytbai, the *qobyz* player who was said to have “healed by playing his *qobyz*.” His shrine, a mound of grass, marked only



by a grillwork metal enclosure, sees frequent visitors, who believe that the place has healing properties. In the grillwork above the gate there is a design that combines an image of the *qobyz* with the Muslim crescent moon.

***A Musical Map of Almaty (or A Brief History of Kazakh Music)***

Almaty is a leafy green city of extreme continental climate, perched on the slope of the Almaty mountains, which run along the southeast border of Kazakhstan. Smog from industry, car exhaust, and coal drifting from outlying areas in the winter is mitigated in the summer by the high green canopy of trees lining the streets, and by numerous parks bursting with the dazzling colors and heady scent of roses. Dry, hot, and achingly bright in the summer, Almaty comes alive at night, when couples and families escape from the heat of apartments to stroll through parks and along boulevards. Grandmothers gather in groups to catch up on news while keeping an eye on their young grandchildren running around the fountains and through the pine, birch, and apple trees nearby. Winter brings icy cold down from the mountains and people on their way to work and shops can be seen gingerly treading expansive sections of black ice covering the sidewalk, trying to avoid the inevitable falls and broken bones so common during this season.

Almaty is a city of extremes, whether of climate or wealth. Residents speak nostalgically of the old (Soviet) Almaty, lined with bountiful apple trees, with ample housing and slow but easy life and work for its citizens. Almaty today represents for many a grinding life—a city where low wages do not begin to cover the rent for even the simplest of apartments. And on the other end of the spectrum, luxury apartments and individual houses are being built higher and higher up the mountain slope, where clean air and breathtaking views are available to a privileged few.

The musical landscape of Almaty is similarly varied. At the Kazakh Concert Hall, across from the Kurmangazy National Conservatory, you can hear Kazakh *khalyq en* (folk song), or a Kazakh *küi* (pl. *küiler*), performed on solo *dombra* (plucked two-stringed lute) or more rarely *qobyz*. A *küi* is a programmatic, sometimes virtuosic, instrumental piece often associated with a specific narrative, and seen as encapsulating Kazakh philosophy. A solo genre prior to the nineteenth century, *küiler* have been adapted and composed for orchestra. Such performances largely revolve around the conservatory, which draws talent from disparate parts of the country and feeds into the main performance venues for Kazakh music, i.e., the Kazakh State Kurmangazy Orchestra of Folk Instruments, the concerts of the top solo performers of Kazakh music (singers, dombrists, and *qobyz* players), and those few performers who become successful recording artists. The conservatory requires standardized instruments and classically-trained musicians, and often polishes away the beautiful timbral nuances of Kazakh solo music as it was played sixty years ago and is still played in other parts of the country and in less cosmopolitan settings. The conservatory is also home to a large and very important archive of old recordings of great Kazakh performers and composers. As arguably the most recognized, centralized institution of Kazakh music anywhere, the conservatory holds the golden key of access between Kazakh musicians and those producers, recording industries, festivals-organizers making inquiries from abroad. As such, the favored conservatory students and alumni put forward by the faculty are those who gain access to the international stage.

Just up the slope from the conservatory (Almatyites describe locations using “up” and “down” rather than the cardinal directions) is the Zhambyl National Philharmonic Hall with orchestral performances of Western art music. The nearby Abay National Ballet and Opera Theater features ballets and operas by Kazakh, Russian, Italian, and French composers, among

others. The Opera House, a beautifully refurbished building with plush blue velvet seats and gilded domed ceilings, continues to feature new Kazakh compositions for opera and ballet. One beautiful and innovative modern ballet, *Zheztyrnak*, premiered at the Opera on November 12, 2004. A ballet in two acts with music by B. Akoshev and A. Mukatai and libretto by Galym Dosken, *Zheztyrnak* is based on Kazakh folklore, which describes bloodthirsty human-like creatures with long, razor-sharp nails who lure and attack unwary travelers. Despite some complaints of plummeting funding and quality,<sup>10</sup> opera, ballet, and symphony performances continue to pack the house and remain a point of pride for Almatyites. Just as the establishment of the opera house was once viewed as a mark of a modernization for Kazakhs in the early Soviet era, the recent flourishing of new composers and new works of art, like *Zheztyrnak*, which showcase new Kazakh talent and draw from Kazakh history, literature, and mythology, are hailed by many as essential for bringing independent Kazakhstan into the post-Soviet era.

The building of the opera house, philharmonic, and the conservatory was considered a necessary step in the early days of the Soviet Union (1930s–1940s) in establishing a national music for each nationality. By the end of the 1930s, “each national republic was required to build a national opera house and to create a repertory for it.” (Frolova-Walker 1998:35). To this end, local composers were trained, sometimes with the cooperation of Russian composers and musicologists, to construct “Classical” Kazakh music using Western compositional techniques and functional harmony with the stylistic “flavor” of Kazakh songs.

Ahmet Zhubanov, who established the Orchestra of Folk Instruments, used similar

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<sup>10</sup> Many of the complaints of this nature were offered by middle-aged and elderly theater-goers, who compared the quality of today’s local opera and ballet unfavorably with that of the Soviet era. The complaints of younger Almatyites tended more toward what they saw as the irrelevance for today’s youth of both European operas and Kazakh operas in the Soviet style, like *Abay* and *Ablai Khan*. In contrast, *Zheztyrnak* was well attended and well received by younger audience members.

principles to meld indigenous solo traditions with Western art music. Zhubanov modeled his ensemble after the Andreev Orchestra of Russian Folk Instruments, which adapted and altered indigenous instruments and instrumentation in order to accommodate Western harmony, timbre, and multisectional orchestration. As Andreev had done with the *balalaika* in the Russian orchestra, Zhubanov created different sizes of *dombra* and *qobyz* to mimic the high, middle and low ranges of the western string section. The traditional hair strings of the *qobyz* were replaced with violin strings to approximate a timbre more closely related to the violin.

One of the foundations of the Kazakh folk orchestra's repertoire was the *küi*. Because of the virtuosic demands of the *küi*, it was well suited to Western art traditions of orchestration. Set to an orchestral accompaniment, the lead *dombra* could play expressive, showy passages, much like the concerto setting in Western art music. Several other factors went into this very conscious distancing from the "simplistic" folk music and "advancement" to art music. One was the change from relative diatonic tuning (not based on a particular pitch) to chromatic tuning based on equal temperament. In addition, the adjustments made to instruments often allowed for greater technical virtuosity (i.e., speed, agility, precision) than had the older folk instruments. As Muhambetova points out, the "'improvements' of the *qobyz* went so far that they led to the creation of a new instrument on which the traditional repertoire could not be performed" (Muhambetova 1995:74). Further, the drive for virtuosity in the new folk orchestra overshadowed the attention to timbral subtleties emphasized in the older Kazakh solo traditions. This attention to timbre endures in the Kazakh solo *qobyz* tradition, however, in which the pre-Soviet form of the instrument is still quite commonly played.

The Kökil Music College, founded by Abdulhamit Raimbergenov, arguably represents the antithesis of conservatory training. The students are not taught to read music but rather learn

to play and sing by ear. Neither do they represent an elite group of special talent. Raimbergenov's aim is rather to get back the ability and appreciation of pre-conservatory musicianship that was if not erased then appreciably reduced during the Soviet era.

"Our task isn't to train young virtuosos," Raimbergenov explained in a 2004 BBC interview. "For them, there are specialist music schools. Our aim is to let ordinary children hear our own Kazakh music so that they understand and love their musical tradition" (Abdulhamid Raimbergenov, BBC).

When I visited the school in 2004, I was struck by the seriousness of the young students, and of Raimbergenov's endeavor to take back Kazakh music from the homogenizing machine of conservatory training. He was insistent that Kazakh music was not meant to be written down, and that the very act of transcribing and learning from that written transcription changes the nature of both the learning process and the music itself. He spoke of the narrative and dramatic aspect of Kazakh instrumental music and demonstrated how gesture and physical expression is used to convey the narrative and philosophical meaning of the piece. As he played a *kiii* on *dombra*, he indicated extramusical hand gestures that ornament the musical performance and help to weave in the story behind it.

Kokil was sponsored by the Aga Khan Foundation, an Ismaili organization supporting cultural and civic development programs in many countries throughout Central and Western Asia.<sup>11</sup> "Aga Khan stresses the importance of supporting cultural heritage, particularly in developing nations such as those in post-Soviet Central Asia, in which support for the arts is foundering. Support through Aga-Khan's Tradition-Bearers Program is intended to forge a link

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<sup>11</sup> The foundation has many branches; the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), for example, "focuses on the physical, social, cultural and economic revitalisation of communities in the Muslim world" (Aga Khan Foundation website, accessed June 29, 2011).

between artists and performers of older musical traditions (particularly those not included in Soviet-era conservatory training) and a new generation of music students. Happily for Raimbergenov his goal of training a new generation of Kazakhs who will love and understand Kazakh oral traditions fit well with the goals of Aga Khan Foundation, which has provided both support and exposure for this small school with lofty ambitions.

One of Raimbergenov's teachers is epic singer Ulzhan Baibussynova. Singing with the throaty "epic voice" reminiscent of Siberian throat singers, Ulzhan believes strongly in the supernatural powers and moral responsibility of a *zhyrau* (epic singer). Featured on Theodore Levin's Smithsonian DVD *Bardic Divas*, Ulzhan, shown at the shrine of legendary *qobyz* player, Korkyt (approximately tenth century), in southern Kazakhstan, speaks about the supernatural gifts of a *zhyrau*. In my interview with her, Ulzhan explained that these gifts are innate, are the birthright of Kazakhs only (and then only a few), and cannot be learned (personal communication, November 12, 2004). I have come across the view frequently in my interviews with musicians that talent, particularly for *zhyraular* and *aqynlar*, is a gift that is given and cannot be learned; neither can it be denied, once bestowed upon the receiver. Like shamanism, musicianship is seen as fated and unavoidable, an unexpected blessing and an unwanted curse.

Another interesting hub of musical/ideological activity is The Museum of Kazakh Folk Instruments, housed in a quaint wooden building at the edge of Panfilov Park. The Museum is at the center of the push to expand the small assortment of Kazakh instruments and to create small folk ensembles featuring a greater variety of sounds. While the *dombra*, *shangqobyz* (jaw's harp), *sybyzgy* (end-blown flute) and *qobyz* are generally considered core Kazakh music instruments, other instruments long out of use in the region, like the small clay flute and the *zhetigen* (a seven-stringed plucked zither), are being newly "reconstructed" based on instruments

found in local archeological digs. Several other percussion instruments have been creatively added to the ensembles.

Ensemble music is not native to Kazakhstan—the *dombra*, *qobyz*, *sybyzgy* and *shangqobyz* have long, rich traditions and extensive folk repertoire, but exclusively as solo instruments. The “ensemblization” of Kazakh music (formerly solely for solo instrument or instrument and voice) was a project of the Soviets, which has had very long reaching consequences. The past few years have seen a rapid proliferation of small Kazakh folk ensembles that specialize in folk songs and *küiler*. These ensembles often include the *qobyz*, *dombra*, and *sybyzgy* as primary melodic instruments, together with the *shangqobyz* (Jew’s harp) and reconstructed “historical” instruments, many of them percussion. These “historical” instruments are added for authenticity, color, and to fill out the small collection of traditional Kazakh instruments. Percussion and noise-making instruments include the *asatayaq* (a shaman’s rod, hung with bits metal), the *qongyrau* (bells), *tokyldaq* and *saqpan* (rattles), *syldyrmaq* (shaken metallic pendants) and *tuyaq tas* (horse hoofs, played by clapping them together). Small ensembles like Sazgen, Otrar, and Zhetisaz appear in many performance contexts and are particularly in demand during Nauryz, as they represent a display of Kazakh musical culture in an eye-catching, sonically colorful form that is particularly well suited to festival celebrations.

In taxis, cafes, and bars, the soundscape is largely dominated by Russian and Kazakh pop music (mostly singer-centric with synthesized beat and accompaniment, though you can also hear those with backup bands playing electric guitar, bass, and drumset) with a smattering of European and American rock songs and dance hits from the past decade or two. An occasional taxi driver or, more rarely, restaurant owner will play a recording of some interesting Russian jazz band or Kazakh *dombra* virtuoso. And some bars have live music, like the Guinness Pub on

Dostyk whose house band specializes in 1980s American rock, or the Uzbek-themed restaurant Kishlak, with Kazakh musicians accompanying costumed dancers.

The past two decades have also seen the rise of Kazakh rock groups featuring *dombra* and *qobyz*, including Roksonaki, ABK, Ulytau, Saz Otau, as well as the constant crop of young virtuosic *dombra* players. One of the earliest of these groups, ABK, included singer Kydyraly Bolmanov, husband of famous folk singer Karakat. ABK was important in planting the seeds for the fusion of Kazakh traditional music and rock music, taking the emotionality of Kazakh folk music and the drive of *tökpe*-style *dombra* playing (which features very fast virtuosic playing while maintaining the characteristic driving beat) and applying it to rock sensibility. Kydyraly, now a member of the Almaty city government, became a powerful creative and political force behind the Kazakh rock scene. He produced the now-famous group Ulytau, a young hip band performing Kazakh rock (largely instrumental) music in warrior-sexy costuming (also Kydyraly's brainstorm). Ulytau is the name of the legendary place in central Kazakhstan where the Kazakh people achieved unity when the three Kazakh *zhuzes* (umbrella clans) joined together as a single state. Ulytau's *dombra* player Erzhan describes his group:

"In general, Ulytau was formed as an experimental collective. ... From the very beginning, our producer [Kydyraly Bolmanov] wanted to bring to life his dream—to unite Kazakh folk music with classical music. Unfortunately many people often talk about how the "raisin" [highlight] of Ulytau is the violin. But the idea, the whole point, is all about the *dombra*." (Erzhan of Ulytau in interview by Kumysai Sarbasova 2004)

Kydyraly Bolmanov writes about his "dream" in a recent interview:

"I formed the group Ulytau in order to awaken the genius within the soul of young people, which comes to us in the blood of our ancestors. There is a musical term "drive." The *dombra* has a lot of drive, and it makes the music move like the loud foreign music that our youth is accustomed to hearing. Ulytau works in this way." (Kydyraly Bolmanov in interview by Duman Anash 2005)



Indeed, many subsequent bands have tapped into the energy that the *dombra* brings to this genre and similar “Kazakh rock” bands have cropped up in the past few years.

### ***Learning to play the qobyz***

When I studied *qobyz*, my first teacher was Sayan Akmolda, a successful Kazakh musician in his thirties, who represents an interesting position between the academy and rural life. Though he went through training in the conservatory in Almaty, Sayan is from a rural region in southern Kazakhstan and learned to play the *qobyz* in early childhood. His learning is aurally based—he learned to play *qobyz küiler* and folk songs from an important traditional *qobyz* player, Symytai Ymbetpaev (who learned from the son of legendary composer Ykhylas Dükenuly), and only later learned the Western pedagogical techniques of scales and arpeggios as an adult student in the conservatory. Linguistically, too, he is an anomaly in Almaty. He speaks Russian with an accent; Kazakh is his native tongue and he speaks it fluently and beautifully. He has important family connections—his brother is a famous Kazakh actor, appearing on television and onstage at the Auezov Theater in Almaty—and he has been picked up by international festivals and concert tours, most notably the Silk Road tour organized by the Smithsonian Institute (managed by ethnomusicologist Theodore Levin and featuring cellist Yo Yo Ma). Culturally and linguistically Kazakh, but with significant international exposure as well as a charismatic onscreen/onstage presence, he was chosen to host a television program on Kazakh music.

My second *qobyz* teacher, Sersen Galei, was a childhood friend of Sayan’s. Now primarily a *dombra* player, Sersen also learned *qobyz* as a child from the same teacher as Sayan. Unlike most contemporary *qobyz* players, who use the flat of the nail to press the strings, resulting in a clean, bright sound closer to the classical aesthetic, Sersen plays in the old style, using the fleshy tips of his fingers to push on the strings. Sersen’s sound is rich and round and

slightly muted, allowing more overtones to shimmer around the main note. Sayan, on the other hand (as Sersen explained to me), plays in the new style, with his nail, but he uses the side of his nail, catching part of the cuticle and flesh of the finger, thus approximating the mellow, rich sound of the old style, while taking advantage of the clarity achieved by playing on the nail. Even in his performance style, Sayan mixes traditions, finding a distinct advantage in the middle road.

My experience learning *qobyz* was composed of equal parts frustration and sheer joy. A difficult instrument, particularly for someone who had never wielded a bow, the *qobyz* never ceased to enthrall me—once I learned how to produce a palatable sound. The *qobyz* is bowed with the palm facing up similar to the position you would use to hold chopsticks. The bow itself is extremely light, and its horsehair strings strung very loosely, so that the bowing hand must produce the proper (variable) tension by pulling on horsehair steadily with the ring finger and pinky as the bow is drawn across the instrument strings. The two strings of a *qobyz*, tuned a fifth or a fourth apart depending on the repertoire, are bundles of horsehair about a quarter-inch thick. The combination of the loosely strung bow and the texture of the horsehair strings makes for slow progress at the beginning. Once I learned to produce a smooth-sounding note, I practiced for hours a day, loving the rich dark tones of my instrument.

The *qobyz* has quite a resonant lower register, surprisingly so considering the instrument's relatively small size. The body is carved from a single piece of wood and is usually quite thick. There are different shapes for the body, but it is usually some variation of a keyhole shape, with a rounded top, tapering to a narrow base, flat at the bottom. The slightly “nasal” timbre comes from the *qobyz*'s skin head stretched across the narrower half of the body and often with a single pointed edge attached to the inside of the back wall. A *qobyz* may have very lovely

carved, painted or burned ornamentation on the neck and body. Mine is quite plain, but several of my teachers and colleagues have coveted it for its rich sound. This type of *qobyz*, called a *kyl-qobyz*, a term which distinguishes it from its modernized cousin of the orchestral variety, is always made by hand. Further, usually the instrument-maker (sometimes also a musician) makes each part from scratch, tanning the hide, carving the body and neck, and cutting, washing, and bundling the horsehair strings. Replacing the strings is no easy task, as they are not sold ready-made. When I broke my strings after tuning them too tightly, my first *qobyz* teacher, Sayan, had to make a long trip to the hippodrome outside of Almaty, where he searched for hours to find a horse whose tail had not yet been trimmed for the winter.

The first songs Sersen wanted to teach me were simple Kazakh folk songs, mostly in major keys, played in the higher register of the instrument. I really wanted to learn the mournful-sounding *küiler* of Ykhylyas Erdenuly (1843–1916) that I had heard Sayan play and loved for their contemplative feel. This was the first of many times when I had the sense that Sersen was wary of letting our lessons get too far, of teaching me too much, as if he was protective of something he thought I could not understand. As in my fruitless efforts to convince Ulzhan to teach me epic singing, I had the distinct impression that certain genres like epic singing and some *qobyz küi* were perhaps tacitly protected traditions.

After much convincing, Sersen agreed to try to teach me *küi* but only after I had mastered a few folk songs. I first learned “Gul’darigha” and “Gul’deraiym.” These songs, though melodically simple were actually not simple to play. They both required learning a second hand position, common for these higher-register, up-tempo songs in a major key. Unlike the *küi* I would learn later, this type of song often requires a short-bowing technique to produce the lively melodies. Additionally, the scale used in these two songs was complicated by the use of a

harmonic in rising phrases, but, on the same note, the harmonic was not used in the descent. This was my first clue in *qobyz* playing that timbre and overtone constitutes a core part of *qobyz* repertoire, and that specific manipulation of timbre is built into certain pieces as firmly as melody.

The next piece I learned, also based on vocal repertoire, was “Aittym Salem Kalamkas,” written by probably the most important Kazakh literary figure, the poet and philosopher, Abay Qunanbaiuly (1845–1904). When I told a Kazakh friend about learning it, she was delighted, and said that her mother had sung it to her as a lullaby. This and other songs based on Abay’s poetry (with melody also attributed to Abay) tend to have a lovely lyrical swooping melody, in minor mode, with gentle tempos and wide, dramatic leaps, perfect for a soprano voice. These pieces are quite typical of nineteenth-century composed song, many of which have been adapted to the instrumental repertoire. Though I could sing this piece perfectly adequately, I found it difficult to navigate the wide range smoothly on *qobyz*, and my endless attempts basically flopped.

Nevertheless, Sersen finally allowed me to graduate to *küi*, to my great joy. A kind soul, he must have recognized that all those perky melodies were killing me. He introduced me to the wonderful mid-nineteenth century composer, Ykhylas. While many *küi* in the repertoire were adaptations of *dombra küi*, Ykhylas wrote specifically for *qobyz*. His pieces make use of sounds and techniques characteristic of this instrument, including rhythmic bowing and timbral manipulations. His compositions are also deceptively simple at first listen, composed of repetitive, subtly evolving melodic cells of only a few notes. The beauty of these *küi* is in the phrasing. Strict, metronome tempo is not possible when playing Ykhylas, as the movement follows phrasing, and often has an irregular pulse.

Ykhylas's "Erden" seems to have all the ingredients that make the genre of *qobyz küi* so remarkable. As I described above, it is composed of Ykhylas's signature cellular phrasing, which begins in the lowest register, showing off the gorgeous deep tones of the instrument. The melody moves up to the middle register as the piece progresses, also typical of Ykhylas's compositions, followed by a repetition of the entire first "A" section. This is where it gets interesting. In "Erden," this repetition takes place in the same register, but in a different timbral placement. The bow is placed several inches closer to the bridge, which, in place of the rich, rounded tone, produces a raspy melody with a constant squeaky, scraping addition of overtones. It is as if the sweet melony timbre of the *qobyz* has been split open and the entire overtone series it holds becomes audible. Valentina Süzükei, who co-authored, with Ted Levin, *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing: Sound, Music, and Nomadism in Tuva and Beyond*, provides a wonderful description of different timbral manipulations in her discussion of timbre-centric music in Tuva.<sup>12</sup>

It's easier to express graphically than in words. When you make a sound on the *igil*, it's like spreading open the fan. Inside this one sound is a whole acoustic world created by the spray of overtones that results when you draw a bow across the instrument's horsehair strings.

She continues:

If you pick up snow, pack it into a snowball and throw it, it goes in a single direction and, depending on the force of your throw, it can go quite far. But if you scoop up some loose snow and toss it, no matter how much force you exert, the snow just scatters. Sound is like that. In European music, sound is packed compactly into discrete pitches, with the fundamental frequency and overtones all perceived as one. But Tuvan music is like loose snow, and overtones are like the snow spray. (Levin with Süzükei 2006:48)

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<sup>12</sup> Tuva is an area in south central Siberia that shares a border with Mongolia. It is part of the Altai region, which lies at the pivot of Russia, Mongolia, China, and Kazakhstan.

Süzükei's "loose snow" imagery describes a musical practice—a preference for audible overtones and a heightened attention to timbre in listening, performance, and composition—shared throughout Inner Asia, including parts of Siberia, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. This Inner Asian complex shares more than musical commonalities, and it is important to understand Kazakh music in the broader context of mobile pastoralist lifeways in the region. Indeed, the shamanic and animist<sup>13</sup> roots of Kazakh solo traditions (of the *qobyz* in particular), as well as the supernatural aspects of Kazakh epic singing, are closely related to similar practices throughout Inner Asia.

### ***Patronage, Cosmopolitanism, and the Soviet legacy***

Certain aspects of Kazakh music-making, like the connection to a nomadic past, have so many intertwining branches; one can trace its links to patronage systems, to Soviet cultural policy and post-Soviet national movements, and to the ideological maneuverings of cosmopolitanism. Patronage, for example, has been a part of Kazakh musical life from the pre-Soviet context of clan structures, throughout the Soviet era, when family and clan ties were used in conjunction with high-ranking party cadres access, and into the post-Soviet era, particularly through the difficult economic and political transition of the early 1990s, when many Kazakhs barely avoided starvation and homelessness only through the aid of family networks. The life of a Kazakh musician is by necessity reliant on this patronage system. Indeed today's *aqynlar* often support themselves in ways strikingly similar to those of a century ago. In the popular song-competition (or *aitys*) season, competitive *aqynlar* throughout Kazakhstan continue to rely on the support of powerful patrons in exchange for their musical "advertising" (i.e., improvised social

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<sup>13</sup> Inner Asian animism is a form of nature worship in which the natural world is believed to be inhabited by spirits that, for example, may dwell in a stream, rock, tree, or mountain.

commentary that benefits their patrons)—essentially the same mutually beneficial relationship between *aqynlar* and powerful clan heads that could be seen before the advent of the twentieth century.

The patronage of musicians is present on a state level as well as a family or regional level. Sayan Akmolda's television program is part of a recent trend to promote "real" Kazakh music and musicians. With many of the concert venues dominated by pop singers, traditional Kazakh musicians generally have a difficult time finding work, mainly playing at weddings of family members and teaching at local schools—but a lucky few like Akmolda have been picked out, promoted, and funded by the state. In early 2005, several Kazakh performers, including Akmolda, were chosen for state patronage and given choice apartments in the center of Almaty. In a political system that favors patronage for those performers who can serve as a mouthpiece for the state, Akmolda has been very fortunate to be among those chosen.

Sayan is also at the pivot of cosmopolitan musical life in some ways. Adapting the rural solo *qobyz* playing just slightly to obtain a brighter, clearer timbre, Sayan is well-versed in both the rural tradition he grew up with and in the transnational, cosmopolitan sphere he encountered through the Almaty conservatory and film industry. In an audition for an international music festival that I helped facilitate, Sayan played beautifully from his extremely virtuosic repertoire, while at the same time emphasizing the older, shamanic aspects of the *qobyz* performance practice, a combination that earned him a spotlight in the festival. Sayan is a great performer and has a great facility for switching musical and ideological "languages," depending on his audience.

Musical and social changes during the Soviet era have echoed in the urban cosmopolitanism of Almaty, and can be seen particularly in the centrality of the conservatory,

with its capacity to serve as a pivot point for rural musicians to learn cosmopolitan music-making, and as a gateway for transnational exposure. This process of urbanizing rural musicians and Kazakh solo traditions began during the Soviet era and its modernizing, westernizing gaze can still be felt in the Almaty music scene.

That is not to say that the older traditions have completely disappeared; indeed in rural areas and smaller cities they exist side-by-side with Russian, Kazakh, and Western pop music, accessed through radio, television, and the internet. Kyzylorda, a rural city in south/central Kazakhstan, is home to a school for epic-singers, headed by the famous *zhyrau*, Almas Almatov. When I visited him at his home in 2004, we sat in a large yurt<sup>14</sup> set up in his beautiful yard, which seemed to overflow with apricot, apple, and plum trees—a fertile oasis of greenery in the dusty, desert-like city (if you Google Kyzylorda, you will find an expanse of tan except for a faint green line that traces the Syr Darya river, which runs through the city). The orchards and gardens ran along all three sides of his large house, but Almas explained that he usually entertained in the yurt and that he was more comfortable there. Certainly it was well suited to this gathering, ten *zhyraular*, friends and some former students of Almas, who happened to be in Kyzylorda that evening. Eight men, one woman, and a ten-year-old girl performed portions of epic songs in turn, accompanying themselves on *dombra*. Some, like Almas, sang in the low, gruff “epic voice,” that I think of as a close cousin of throat-singing (or overtone singing); others used a more focused, tense timbre. In between performing, they talked about the piece and about their lives, how they had become *zhyrau*. They praised Almas, his school, and his particular legacy of teaching so many of the younger generation of epic singers. The gathering in Almas’s

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<sup>14</sup> A Kazakh yurt is a portable, dwelling made of wooden accordion-like expandable “ribs” covered with thick felt to create walls. A smoke hole is left open at the center of the roof, where the round crisscrossed wooden center piece (*shangyraq*) functions as a kind of circular cornerstone for the structure.



yurt, lavishly hung with deep-red carpets and brightly felted Kazakh cloths, served as a reminder that Kazakhstan's rural, nomadic roots are still a tangible reality in some parts of Kazakhstan—even though in Almaty, they appear as a contrived national fiction: idyllic scenes of tranquil, nomadic life colorfully pictured on a billboard in the middle of a four-lane traffic circle. The lives of Almas and Sayan, the teaching of Sersen, and the complex music of the *qobyz* all bear hallmarks of these important processes, revealing the layers of Kazakhstan's Soviet and nomadic past, which continue to coexist alongside the burgeoning cosmopolitanism of Almaty and the nation-building efforts of Astana, the country's new capital.

## CHAPTER THREE

### INDEPENDENCE DAY

#### **Kazakh Nationalism, Eurasianism, and the Friendship of the Peoples**

The years 2004–2005 were particularly interesting in Kazakhstan as President Nursultan Nazarbaev stepped up his bid for reelection and his effort to win the support of his diverse constituency. It is in this context, one year before presidential elections, on the main square in the cosmopolitan former capital, Almaty, that I stood viewing the unfolding holiday celebrations in honor of Kazakhstan’s Independence Day.

It was December 19 and the day was raw and gray, the sun so dampened it looked more like early morning than nearly noon. The festivities were scheduled to start at noon, but at 11:30 little was happening. A few festival-goers, many of them visitors from out of town, milled about as scattered booth keepers set up along one edge of the square. The Ploshad’ Respubliki (Republican Square) was bleak, barely brightened by the holiday banners—scant blue and yellow slivers hung on poles and gathered together in bouquets. A billboard hanging high above the square showed images of Kazakh yurts superimposed over the Almaty mountains and read “Our goal: Peace and Prosperity.”<sup>15</sup> People slowly gathered at one end of the square, where the statue of the Golden Man<sup>16</sup> rode the Snow Leopard<sup>17</sup> high overhead on a tall pedestal spike. That corner of the square was the site of an informal Independence Day tradition and people were

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<sup>15</sup> The Russian word for prosperity is *blagodenstvie*, which carries implications that the English does not. The Russian word implies that prosperity is a result of good deeds, like a mitzvah.

<sup>16</sup> The Golden Man is a Saka statue estimated to be from the 4th or 3rd century B.C. It was discovered in a burial site at Issyk Kurgan, not far from Almaty, and has been adopted as a national symbol of Kazakhstan. Though Kazakhs are not generally accepted as existing as a named group until the fifteenth or sixteenth century, earlier Turkic civilizations like the Saka are folded into the early history of Kazakh nationhood. Claiming the Golden Man as “Kazakh” serves to historicize Kazakh nationhood.

<sup>17</sup> The snow leopard is native to the region and has been adopted as a national symbol.

placing flowers at the foot of the statue to commemorate the bloodshed that occurred on this day in 1986.

My discussion of the events on Independence Day examines how independence is marked and understood in Kazakhstan, and how this contributes to the crafting of an independent state. I examine how the meaning of independence is contested, and I look at the larger sphere of influence, that is, how large-scale ideologies and external relations affect nation-building in Kazakhstan. In particular I explore the ways in which the multiethnic nature of Kazakhstan is managed and performed within the Independence Day festival, and posit that this understanding is very much informed by the legacy of a multiethnic Soviet Union and the current rise of Eurasianism.

Underpinning Soviet nationality policy is the concept of *Druzhba Narodov* or “Friendship of the Peoples,” a durable and seminal idea that affected a very large stretch of territory under Soviet influence at the time and continues to inform state policy in contemporary Kazakhstan. Adopted by regimes from Eastern Europe to mainland China,<sup>18</sup> this ideological concept touts the equality and harmony of all nationalities, but in practice has supported the primacy of the majority group while encouraging a surface expression of nationalism for minority nationalities through “harmless” displays of national costumes, cuisine, and most importantly for this project, minority music and dance. The superficial support of minority nationalities and simultaneous maintenance of a majority-dominated power balance was a mainstay of Soviet policy and of Soviet holiday events. The Kazakhstani government has

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<sup>18</sup> Stalin was very influential in the Peoples’ Republic of China before the Sino-Soviet split and his writings on the Soviet nationalities policy were used to form the basis of Chinese policy towards its minority nationalities. The seminal concepts in these writings still persist in Chinese festival performances and minority policies.

mirrored Soviet nationality policy to a surprising degree, and the spirit of *Druzhba Narodov* is still clearly evident in state-sponsored festivals and other performance genres.

### ***Druzhba Narodov* and Soviet-Style Holidays**

The basic model of the “Friendship of the Peoples” appears in many different performance contexts in Kazakhstan. Perhaps the most striking example I encountered, and one which very clearly demonstrates the concept, is a puppet show called “*Prazdnik Prodalzhaetsia*” (The Holiday Continues). This was one of the first events I attended in Kazakhstan, and I was astounded at how closely this children’s show resembled Soviet-era celebrations, with a lineup of several Soviet “nationalities” performing song and dance routines and coming together for the final encore. When I interviewed the director she said that this sort of performance was very important today because it helped to encourage unity and dissolve ethnic tensions in order to promote the flourishing and development of the new Kazakhstan. However, when I pressed her for specific origins of the musical puppet show, it turned out that it was actually written in the Soviet era, was part of her revolving schedule of plays, and is performed almost exactly as it was in Soviet times. This example provides insight into the patterning that happens in many performances, and I would argue, *particularly* around holidays, when tradition and habit dictate some measure of continuity of celebration. The title “The Holiday Continues” thus seemed to me a very apt description of the continuation of Soviet-era habits of celebration into the post-Soviet period.

More specifically, patterns of performance originally crafted to reflect Soviet ideology are now being used to support nation-building in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. While in public speeches Nazarbaev speaks of striking a new, forward-looking course for his young country, there are parallels to be drawn between Kazakhstan and the Soviet Union—both feature a

powerful centralized state governing a very multiethnic population. It is thus unsurprising that Soviet-era festivals are used as blueprints for current holiday performances in Kazakhstan.

### **Independence Day on the Square**

Independence Day celebrations in the central square in Almaty were at first glance quite similar to Soviet-era performances. The staged performances included a long program of song and dance numbers, mostly by various ethnic groups: Polish, Turkish, Cossack, Uyгур, Korean, Russian, Jewish, Dungan (Muslim Chinese, or Hui) and a grand finale of all the participants singing together. My interviews on the square on that day were equally in line with this ideology of Friendship of the Peoples—indeed, some even used this phrase to describe what they saw as relatively stable ethnic relations in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Most interviewees backed the official line: prevailing ethnic harmony in the new Kazakhstan, the success of Nazarbaev in building this young country, and optimism for its continued economic development.

But despite this initial impression, Independence Day turned out to have many contrasting faces. First, the Independence Day festivities on the square displayed a merging of regional and national ideologies as the old *Druzhba Narodov* model dovetailed with the forward-looking Eurasianism, and both ideologies supported the easing of internal ethnic tensions and the concurrent push for a strong partnership with Russia. Second, while *Druzhba Narodov* largely prevailed during the daytime performance on the square, an evening concert of *oralman* Kazakh musicians and televised programs aired on Independence Day carried an ethnonationalist slant that ran strongly counter to the message of multiethnic unity in the daytime performances. Further, when examined closely the daytime performances also revealed pockets of individualism, particularly among the more casual and amateur performances.

Finally, there was the question of the meaning and even timing of independence for different groups. These alternative views emerged mostly after the actual Independence Day events, in subsequent conversations and interviews. I spoke with some people for whom Independence Day was not about 1991, the year Kazakhstan gained statehood, but rather served as a memorial to victims of the youth protest crackdown on the same day in 1986. For these Kazakhstanis, the dark memories of that day eclipsed the festive mood of the staged festivities, and violence—not democracy and unity—remained the central theme of the holiday.

### ***Kazakh Performances: Deconstructing Kazakh Nationalism***

The staged festivities constituted a loose conglomeration of mostly amateur performances under an overarching idea of Friendship of the Peoples. The order of performances is revealing, and also typical of this kind of event. The Kazakh acts come first, with the Russian act inserted in the middle, followed by a succession of acts from other ethnic groups.

The Kazakh performances were dominated by vocal performance, with the marked exception of two youth acts in which dance and drama are central. The Kazakh songs, both newly-composed and reworked folk songs, were sung to a variety of prerecorded synthesized music, including disco tracks, military marches, “Eastern” pop music with an Uzbek or Turkish sensibility and rhythms taken from the Middle Eastern rhythmic modes, and Kazakh orchestral music, with a prominent *dombra* section. These acts were dominated by middle-aged and elderly singers with trained, sometimes operatic voices. The songs were from various eras including a recent pop song and were performed mostly by well-known singers of the Soviet era. With titles like “*Ata Meken*” (Fatherland), “*Tugan Zher*” (Homeland), and “*Kazakhstanym*” (My Kazakhstan), the songs were mostly of a patriotic bent, but more than that, they were also well-known favorites, performed and sung often, even in unofficial contexts.

Performances by Kazakh musicians differed along generational lines. While the older generation sang quite patriotic songs, their cheerful performance style was quite reminiscent of Soviet-era *estrada* (staged Soviet pop music). In contrast, the two acts by younger performers were quite innovative, and conveyed a more focused political message.

The performances of the older generation reflected a Soviet-era quality that was at first difficult to pin down. I came to decide that it was primarily body language and emotional range that divided the older generation from the youth acts. The older generation tended to reflect optimism, nostalgia, or a kind of military patriotism reminiscent of Soviet-era performers. The elderly women in particular reflected an upbeat and industrious brightness with an emphasis on entertainment and audience participation. This was evident particularly in their active body language (clapping with the audience and dancing). In contrast, the military songs were typified by an upright and unmoving performance stance, as in that of two veterans in uniform. Other performances of this same generation of Kazakhs reflected sentimentality and nostalgia. One Kazakh singer performed a Russian song popular in the post-war era called “*Pesnya ostaetsya c chelovekom*” (A Song Remains with You), written by beloved song composer, Arkadii Ostrovskii.

“A Song Remains with You”  
Words and Music by Arkadii Ostrovskii

At night stars float in a deep blue river  
In the morning the stars will be extinguished without a trace,  
Only songs stay with one,  
Songs are your true friends forever.

Refrain:  
Through the years, through the ages,  
On any road, on either side,  
You don’t say goodbye to a song,  
A song doesn’t take its leave of you.

We carry with us songs from our cradle,  
We travel everywhere with our songs,  
How many songs have we sung with our loved ones?  
How many we will still sing with you!

-Refrain-

In the icy cold, a song will warm us.  
In the heat of noon it will be like water,  
Those who cannot sing and listen to songs  
Will never be happy.

This performance, unlike others in the celebration, was not patriotic in any definable way, and did not celebrate Kazakhstan's independence; rather, it seemed to reflect nostalgia for the past. Many Kazakhstanis of this generation admitted to me a special attachment to the old *estrada* songs of their youth, and many sang these songs at social events like birthdays. The first lines, "At night stars float in the dark blue river, in the morning they are extinguished without a trace, Only songs stay with a person, songs are your true friends forever," betrays this attachment. I contend that these song lyrics demonstrate not only nostalgia for the past, but also a lasting emotional connection to the Soviet era.

In contrast, the youth acts had a more artsy, dramatic sensibility and focused on a specific political and emotional message. Silver and black costuming and dramatic gestures set a somber, serious mood. In the first act, male dancers used gestures miming horseback riding and wrestling, very consciously mixing these Kazakh markers with hallmarks of youth culture such as break-dancing. The dance was set to synthesized dance music, repetitive and driving, with synthesized strings resembling the sound of a *dombra* playing over a drone. At the end, a single male performer dressed in white took center stage. Covering his face in a gesture of despair and reaching to the sky with outstretched arms, he "recited" (lip-synchs) a poem about the turmoil of Kazakh history.



Not only did the youth acts send a more deliberate message, the mood and methods of conveyance contrasted sharply with those of their elders. The youth performances focused on the personal and the individual rather than the collective, and conveyed a heightened emotion not typical of Soviet-style performances. While the older performers seemed to be on emotional autopilot, performing songs they had probably been singing in holiday festivals for decades, the younger performers presented an emotionally charged and dramatic moving tableau that portrayed a more personalized view of independence. Though the *words* of the older generations' songs conveyed patriotic messages about "homeland," their Soviet performance style in some ways counteracted the message of the lyrics. In contrast, the youth acts were more specifically about Kazakh history and independence, a message made more powerful because it was reflected on multiple levels (visual, dance, music). I was left with the strong impression that these youthful performances represented a new idea of the country's history, and a Kazakh-centric view of independence.

A young woman who watched the performance with me responded positively to the new direction taken by the younger performers. She was scornful of the old *druzhiba narodov* lineup, and said that the people who planned these events needed a new approach, something more in line with the beliefs and tastes of the population. "But," she said, "As long as the older generation is in power, these Soviet-style performances will probably continue."

### ***Russian Performance: Eurasianism and "The Year of Russia"***

Nazarbaev's theme for 2004 "The Year of Russia in Kazakhstan" emphasized Kazakhstan and Russia as a key regional partnership, an idea that was echoed repeatedly in Independence Day speeches and in the celebration's single performance by a Russian performer. The opening speech placed this partnership within the context of Eurasianist ideology.

The following greeting (in both Russian and Kazakh) opened the Independence Day event:

Dear Almatyites and guests to the southern capital: Happy Independence Day! Today we mark the main holiday of our country, Independence Day. We feel the sure progress of our young country towards sovereignty and democracy. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1991, the constitutional law declaring the independence of the republic of Kazakhstan was declared. We are proud that since time immemorial our country in linking East and West has made a substantial contribution to the development of civilizations. And now, thanks to the farsighted policies of our first president Nursultan Nazarbaev, our state has been recognized by the international community and has set a course for the development and flourishing of Kazakhstanis.

This speech is interesting in that it positions Kazakhstan as an intermediary between East and West, which has implications both domestically and abroad. Implying a balance between “eastern” (Turkic) and “western” (Slavic) peoples, it at once promotes interethnic harmony internally and simultaneously implies cooperation with partners from the former Soviet Union, most notably Russia and the Central Asian states. Further, it is precisely this positioning that is given credit for the “development of civilization” and Kazakhstan’s acceptance into the “world community.” Essentially, this is a Eurasianist speech. The main theme conveyed is twofold. First, Kazakhstan’s role as the fulcrum between eastern and western partners (Russia and Central Asia, or even China) is essential to Kazakhstan’s current position of prominence in the region. And second—and this is a key tenet of Nazarbaev’s Eurasianism—this speech strongly implies that this crucial intermediary position is a natural, geographically- and historically-based role for Kazakhstan.

“The Year of Russia in Kazakhstan” theme was particularly obvious in the performance of Maria Dranova, an ethnic Russian, who sang the following:

“Russia and Kazakhstan”

Rivers are joined in the ocean,

The ocean fears no winds.  
Kazakhstan and Russia forever.  
Russia and we are like brother and sister.

Refrain:  
Russia and Kazakhstan,  
Two suns, two wings.  
Thank you, thank you,  
Because I have  
One fate, one dream,  
Russia and Kazakhstan.

From year to year the Republic is strengthening  
Gaining strength in the friendship of the peoples.  
The Kazakh steppes are blooming  
With islands of Russians roses.

This song is rich with imagery that supports the main ideologies of the festival. In the refrain, the description of Russian-Kazakhstani partnership is combined with nationalist imagery, as the description of Russia and Kazakhstan as “two suns, two wings” refers to the Kazakhstani flag (which depicts an eagle and a sun on a blue background). In verse two the “Friendship of the Peoples” is credited for the Kazakhstan’s strength and prosperity. And the line “the Kazakh steppe is blooming with Russian roses” conveys images of mutual prosperity. Again it is interesting to note that ecology is used to depict and naturalize the intertwined nature of Kazakh-Russian relations.

This performance stood out in the overall festivities in many respects. The act was central in the lineup, sandwiched between two Kazakh performances. It looked more staged and professional than many of the other acts, particularly the groups from the Assembly of Nations,<sup>19</sup> which were clearly amateur. And there was also a sudden shift in the color scheme. While many

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<sup>19</sup> The Assembly of Nations is the post-Soviet incarnation of *Dom Druzhby* (House of Friendship), the official headquarters of the government-sponsored minority nationalities organizations. All dance troupes and minority performance groups who appear at official functions are organized through the Assembly.

Kazakh singers, the set and the decorative banners on the square were in blue and yellow, the colors of the Kazakhstani flag, Dranova was dressed in bright Russian red and gold, colors of the Russian coat of arms and the old Soviet flag. Though she sang “we and Russia,” thus ascribing her own identity to Kazakhstan, her costume, a Russian *sarafan*, highlighted her Russian heritage.

Again, the ambiguity and malleability of key concepts are important; in particular, the use of “we” in this song, and of “East” and “West” in the speech above allows for mutable categories of inclusion and exclusion that are used differently according to circumstance. The last line of the first verse is: “Russia and we are like brother and sister.” “We” in this case means Kazakhstanis, highlighted as a bounded group, a population contiguous with state borders. The image of Russian roses blooming on the Kazakh steppe carries implications of the Russian population in Kazakhstan, an impression strengthened by the appearance of Dranova herself, clad in Russian red. If Russian communities are the “islands” on the “Kazakh” steppe, the impression conveyed is that Kazakhs are the host group, the indigenous group, while Russians are foreign transplants—an image that contradicts the inclusivity of the previous lyrics. In this way, the lines of inclusion can shift depending on whether “we” means “Kazakhstanis” or “Kazakhs,” a sleight-of-hand that plays neatly into Nazarbaev’s dichotomous nation-building policies.

The mutability of “East” and “West” forms the cornerstone of Eurasianism. Eurasianism is all about the in-between, between eastern and western (whether that is Russia or Kazakhstan or somewhere else), between European and Asian (whether Turkic, Mongol, or Slavic), and the inland pole of power that stands between Atlanticism and the powerful Pacific Rim. Russia also has always positioned itself between East and West, though most often opting to call itself

European rather than Asian. Russia's European status was strengthened during its early cooperation with the European Union, particularly around 2004 when ties with France were strong and Russia almost seemed to be taking that country as its model image. Since the gas disputes erupted in 2004 between Russia and its neighbors, most notably Belarus and Ukraine, Russia's relations with the EU have cooled. At the same time Russia has begun to strengthen its position with regard its contiguous neighbors, establishing itself as a uniquely Eurasian, rather than European power. While Kazakhstani foreign policy has gone through slight shifts with regard to the West, Nazarbaev has always been very careful to take a fairly neutral stand in Central Asian conflicts with the U.S. and its allies (for example, in Nazarbaev's handling of the conflict in Andijian in 2004). At the same time, Kazakhstan has remained on fairly friendly terms with China, complying with requests for extraditions of suspected terrorists (mostly Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities from China's northwestern provinces living in Kazakhstan), and signing gas, transportation, and pipeline agreements that benefit China. So, just as Nazarbaev tinkers with inclusion and exclusion in his domestic policies, a similar process is taking place on a macro level. Mirroring Russia's long history of straddling East and West, Kazakhstan too is toying with belonging to both worlds, and even more importantly, bridging them. Largely through gas and oil resources, both Russia and Kazakhstan are able to wield power from their central position, one that is shaping up to be very important in the global energy arena.

The live Independence Day events I have discussed here—the pairing of Kazakh and Russian performances, the wording of the Russian songs which emphasize the partnership between Russia and Kazakhstan, the color schemes mirroring the Russian and Kazakh flags, and the announcers' discussions of the Year of Russia and the depiction of Kazakhstan as “linking

East and West”—all add another piece to the Eurasianist puzzle in tying together both *Druzhba Narodov* and the Russia–Kazakhstan partnership.

### ***Other Nationalities: Pro Forma and Departures***

After the Russian and Kazakh performances, a long program featured dances by Polish, Turkish, Cossack, Uygur, Korean, Russian, Jewish, and Dungan groups. While the majority of acts—including a group of Turkish belly dancers, a Korean choir, and Uygur performers in silver costumes dancing to Uygur pop—fall easily into the *Druzhba Narodov* pattern, the Polish group represented a departure from the guiding ideology. The performance consisted of a Polish youth group wearing T-shirts with the Polish crest and singing a reggae song in Polish with lyrics about “following God.” A few of the boys wore Polish military uniforms. Though this act could easily be dismissed as a group of teens singing their favorite reggae song (very badly), the display of both Polish nationalism and religious thought placed the act slightly outside the general guidelines of the *Druzhba Narodov* model. If the unspoken rules of *Druzhba Narodov* dictate a “harmless” display of national pride, this act arguably contradicts the friendly shoulder-to-shoulder harmony typical of such performances.

It is interesting, in hindsight, to think about the rough edges of this performance in comparison with the later Unity of Nations Day celebration (May 1), whose acts were more polished and professional. Furthermore, in the May 1 event, the “ethnic” dances were not self-representations, but highly choreographed performances by trained dance troupes (ethnically mixed and Kazakh-dominated). Because the May 1 performances were not representations by various different groups but rather centrally choreographed, the images and ideology were more tightly controlled. Thus, while the May 1 event was able to uniformly and unambiguously convey the central concept of *Druzhba Narodov*, the acts in the Independence Day events were

much more loosely pulled together and contained a number of themes that strayed from the main concept of ethnic harmony, like nostalgia for the past and various forms of ethnonationalism. It is interesting, too, to note that the homogenizing of each ethnic group that happens in *Druzhba Narodov* is much easier to achieve when the dance is not a self-representation. As in the puppet show, “The Holiday Continues,” where the ethnic groups were represented by stylized puppets operated by Kazakh puppeteers, similarly, in the May 1 event, the ethnic dances did not depict “real” people, but a stylized version of Polish or Estonian or Ukrainian identities, often performed by Kazakh dancers. In comparison, the Independence Day acts were much more “real,” if also more amateur in appearance. When groups represent themselves, other phenomena are expressed *besides* ethnicity; thus the Polish youth group sang about youthful rebellion and God, the Kazakh youth dance brought up themes of struggle, youth, and masculinity, and the older Kazakh group sang nostalgic Soviet love songs.

### **Independence Day 7 p.m.: The *Oralman* Concert**

The evening concert of *oralman* musicians also took place in central Almaty, just a few minutes walk down the mountain slope from the daytime festivities on the square. It was held at the Dvoretz Respubliki or the Palace of the Republic, a large concert hall and common venue for official events. The audience was almost exclusively Kazakh and the concert was sponsored by the Aga Khan Foundation, an organization headed by the Ismaili leader Aga Khan, supporting cultural projects across Central Asia.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The Aga Khan Foundation official website writes of its support of musical projects in Central Asia:

Music and musicians have historically played a vital role in the cultures of Central Eurasia and the Middle East. Music traditionally served not only as entertainment, but as a way to reinforce social and moral values, and musicians provided models of exemplary leadership. Whether bringing listeners closer to

While the daytime performance on the square emphasized Russian-Kazakh harmony and friendship, the opening of the *oralman* concert reflected animosity towards Russia, stressing past Russian imperialism and persecution rather than the current popular themes of partnership and cooperation. The concert mostly consisted of local Kazakh musicians and singers who had immigrated from China and Mongolia. My analysis focuses on the opening film that preceded the musical portion of the concert. Accompanied by old footage from 1930s war movies, the following passages were heard as a voice-over (in Kazakh):

The sacred land that was protected by our ancestors . . . is vast. Twenty-one centuries ago, the Great Wall of China was considered [that] state's borders. According to the records of the well-known Chinese scholar and turcologist Su Bi Khon, historically the Kazakh nation's eastern edge was not limited only by Xinjiang, but was located even further east, to the Shlyan Mountains at the edge of the Gobi Desert . . . . From the Altai Mountains in the east to the Caspian plateau, three million square kilometers are all Kazakh land . . . . This land was an ancient historical place where Kipchaks, Uisuns, Huns, Turkic tribes used to build their khanates and states. In spite of having very deep roots, we are still strangers [foreigners/wanderers] with a complicated fate.

The Kazakh calamity did not start from the . . . Qingiz Khan invasion, not from the collapse of the Uisyn state. Kazakh refugee life started in the second half of the nineteenth century from the time when Chinese and Russians started dividing land, digging in "striped poles," so-called "borders." The October Revolution followed. The political persecution, famine, and massive destruction culminated in the Second World War. These tragedies decimated the Kazakh population and caused them to wander to the edge of the earth. The great steppe was full of death and smelt bloody. How many "hearth lights were put out as their ashes flew away" [a Kazakh idiom meaning to be destroyed]. People lost their land and individuals lost their people. Gone with the wind, groups of Kazakhs . . . left their homeland. Without direction, hungry and poor they became beggars, "gathering beetles" . . . .

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God, sustaining cultural memory through epic tales, or strengthening the bonds of community through festivity and celebration, musicians have been central to social life. In 2000, recognition of this important role led His Highness the Aga Khan to establish the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia (AKMICA) with the aim of assisting in the preservation of Central Asia's musical heritage by ensuring its transmission to a new generation of artists and audiences, both inside the region and beyond its borders. (Aga Khan website, accessed July 8, 2008)



My people left and my land stayed behind, my beautiful hills and high mountains left behind. It is difficult to leave your motherland. Looking behind, my eyes are tired.

Kazakhs faced their fate . . . and found shelter among Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz people. They passed through China, Russia, and Mongolia, through India and Pakistan they went to Turkey and in the end they were scattered in Europe like millet . . . . They faced a war and found their death. Heroes like Sukhan . . . led their people and fought for the country. Poets, . . . enlighteners and scholars led the people and built a foundation of art and literature. They suffered for independence and justice. Many men sacrificed their lives.

Allah saw Kazakhs' tears and the great empire broke down. The Kazakh nation was called independent. The wishes of five million Kazakhs living in more than 40 countries of the world came true. The relatives headed to our "kara shangyrak" and at last could join us. It is a blessing when a people are united. May God let our happiness last. May the Great Kazakh nation [and] the great Kazakh people prosper! May our blue flag flutter in the sky!

This striking narration addresses the vastness of the historical land of the Kazakhs, the calamity and disaster brought on by Russians and Chinese, and the subsequent uprootedness of Kazakh "refugees" (the Kazakh diaspora), healed finally by independence. The passages stress that the Kazakh tragedy began not at the hands of Turkic neighbors, but at the hands of foreign imperial powers. There is also a sense that Turkic peoples are on the right side of Kazakh history while Russian and Chinese (and possibly Europeans) are on the opposing side. "Kazakhs . . . found shelter among the Uzbeks, Tajiks and Kyrgyz people" whereas they only "passed through" China and Russia, and were "scattered in Europe like millet." While the narrative is not explicitly anti-European it has a ring of the Great Game, the carving up of Central Asia by Russia, China, and England.

Further, this narration stresses Kazakh losses and instability under Russian occupation in contrast to the prosperity and security of the new post-Soviet homeland. In contrast to most of the daytime performances on the square, this event featured heightened emotion in its language

and images. Both the passage and the accompanying images reflect terrible hardship and, as in the phrase “the steppe smelled bloody,” evoke a powerful visceral response. In contrast, the daytime festival performances tended to eschew powerful emotions, relying instead on a forward-looking and upbeat optimism and an occasional nostalgic glance backward. Indeed the only act that approached this narration in emotional intensity was the Kazakh youth act, which, like this narrated video, took a weighty, even solemn approach to Kazakhstan’s independence.

### **Airing Independence**

While the festival and the evening concert were fairly well attended considering the raw weather, the truth is that most of my friends and acquaintances rarely attended these outdoor festivals. Holidays like Independence Day represented a day off from work, a day to relax, hang out, eat, and watch television. Considering this, I decided to include television in my analysis of Independence Day events.

The television programs that I recorded on the *Kazakhstan* channel were quite different in tone and content than most of the acts on the square that day (with the exception of the Kazakh youth act, which was thematically similar to these programs). While the live festivities stressed interethnic cooperation and harmony in the style of Soviet *Druzhba Narodov* song and dance routines, the television programs largely ignored the multiethnic makeup of Kazakhstan’s population and instead focused on Kazakh history and culture. The televised programs included Kazakh music videos, a concert of Kazakh folk songs, a short film featuring Kazakh musical traditions, and a narrated photomontage tracing economic, political, and historical developments in Kazakhstan to the present. The programs were entirely in Kazakh.

One of the most prominent elements in televised music programs was the prevalence of Kazakh instruments, an element almost completely lacking in live holiday performances in

Almaty. Oddly, Kazakh traditional music could be heard much more often on television than in the live events. In general, while Kazakh instruments were often used as visual *symbols* of Kazakh cultural heritage, appearing on billboards and banners with messages about Kazakh cultural heritage, they were rarely commissioned to actually play at national or any official events. Likewise, traditional musicians were held up as a vital part of Kazakh history and identity, but many complained that there was a small and shrinking place for them among the Kazakhstani public. Thus the playing of instruments was placed in the mythologized past while their active role in live musical performance was precarious and unsupported.

The short film *Babalar Uny* aired on Independence Day features an impressive array of Kazakh musical traditions, including performances on the *qobyz*, the Kazakh upright fiddle, and the *dombra*, the Kazakh plucked two-stringed lute, and underscores the symbolic role of Kazakh instruments. The plot is simple: after a driver's car breaks down in the countryside, the driver is forced to spend the night on the open steppe, where he experiences a kind of cosmic return to a mythical Kazakh past. The main character, played by a famous musician, is transformed from a modern-day guy into an epic singer or *zhynrau* (epic singer), and then an *aqyn* (a poet-singer with expertise in improvisation).

The *aqyn* and *zhynrau* are important figures in Kazakh history. *Aqynlar* (pl. of *aqyn*) functioned as social critics and conveyors of news and *zhynraular* (pl. of *zhynrau*) served as a crucial repository for Kazakh mythology and history; as the Kazakh language did not exist in written form until the nineteenth century, early history was transmitted orally through *zhynraular*. *Zhynraular* also retained clan genealogical records, as they had to be able to recite the clan lineage back many generations. This was important because Kazakh marriage laws dictated extreme exogamy, forbidding marriage among those sharing a common ancestor up to seven generations

back. While they are still active today, *aqynlar* and *zhyraular* play a less important role now than in the past, when epic singers served as a main repository for Kazakh mythology and history, and poet-singers provided important social commentary and censure, helping to guide clan decisions and morals.

As the main character drives through the countryside, shots of his journey are overlaid with various images: ancient petroglyphs of the Altai, herds of wild horses, stylized images of mountains and rivers, and scenes of Kazakh warriors locked in battle with an enemy. Scenes of the past and present are juxtaposed on the landscape. The driver is slowed by a herd of sheep on the road, passes a body of water, and heads into the mountains, where his car breaks down. He walks into the mountains and sits down on a hilltop, reading. As the sun sinks lower on the steppe, he seems to slip into a past era. We hear the sound of a *qobyz*—then we see that it is being played by our main character, now dressed in traditional Kazakh embroidered coat and stiff, embroidered Kazakh hat.

As is typical, the *zhyrau* draws out the first note (typically a fifth above tonic), placed high and tight in his vocal range, and the resulting sound is focused and intense. He then switches to what is sometimes called the “epic” voice, a rough, growling vocal style close to throat-singing, pitched fairly low in the vocal range. It is significant that our hero plays the *qobyz*, fairly atypical for *zhyraular*, who usually accompany themselves on *dombra*. The *qobyz* has a long history of connections with shamanism, and still carries a mystic quality. Here, the image of a *qobyz* player sitting alone in the mountains strengthens the sense that there is something magical happening—that he is magically transporting himself into the past. This journey that he first began, driving through the mountains, has become a journey into the past. Like the Kazakh shaman who uses the *qobyz*’s deep sonorous tones to transport himself into the

spirit world, the main character is in a way detaching from the present. Like the *estrada* performance that connects to the Soviet past in the Independence Day performance on the square, here Kazakh music is highlighted as a way of connecting to the to a mythologized Kazakh past.

As night falls, the main character, still in Kazakh dress, sits at a campfire and sings another song, this time with *dombra* accompaniment. Other men have happened upon his campfire and gather to listen. As is typical, the *zhyrau* doubles his vocal melody on *dombra* and plays a rhythmic vamp between phrases. As dawn approaches, the men around the campfire slip back into this century. Wearing a T-shirt and black jeans, the main character finishes the epic song, while the others, also in contemporary dress, listen sleepily and warm themselves by the fire as their horses graze nearby. In the morning, it is as if this nighttime encounter with the past never happened. The main character walks back to his car in the early morning, and, after a little tinkering, the car starts up. He continues on his journey out of the mountains and the film, which ends abruptly as his car approaches a town. While the night-time scene appears as a dream in the bright light of day, it is this scene that is the heart of the film, while the approaching town signals the film's end.

As in other films and music videos of this type, there seems to be confusion as to what the “real” time is. The scenario is fairly typical of Kazakh videos: a journey into the Kazakh countryside, the experiencing of Kazakh lifeways that have disappeared from the city, and then the return journey into the city. This dichotomy of past/rural/traditional vs. modern/urban/post-industrial is often used in “*istoricheskii*” or “historical” Kazakh music videos, and is widespread in those of other developing countries as well. The nostalgia in this short film hinges on both fragments from the past (like the *qobyz*) and the merging of past and present through visual

overlay and overlapping narratives. Further, this is as much a story of place as of time. The hero's connection to the landscape, as he sits alone on the hillside at sunset, is what initiates his interaction with the past. As in other films and music videos of this type, it is place that allows the merging of past and present, facilitating restorative nostalgia and nationalist narratives of unbroken lines of history.

Interestingly, one music video, Saz Otau's "Sagym Dala," aired shortly following this movie, seems to mock this modern/traditional, rural/urban dichotomy so common in Kazakh "historical" music videos. This video depicts Saz Otau, a *dombra/qobyz* duo, flying over a desolate landscape in a wooden orb spaceship. Suggesting a Mad Max-style alternate universe, it blends the pre-industrial traditional past with an imaginative space-age future. The woman is seated, playing the *qobyz*, with the male *dombra*-player standing behind her. The female musician plays with a dry humor, looking directly into the camera, her body upright and almost motionless in an attitude of mock-seriousness. Flying in an ancient spaceship, Saz Otau seems to be sidestepping the problematic post-Soviet present. Presenting a tongue-in-cheek mythological worldview, Saz Otau smirks at the canonical view of the Kazakh past, as well as its logical evolution to the future. Eschewing both the economic development trajectory and the historicized, mythologized view of Kazakhstan's cultural heritage, this video upends the central tenets of nation-building. It interrupts the flow of progress and modernity, of economic development and cultural flourishing, and instead presents a floating present, disconnected to a real past or a real future. Further, it is futuristic without being nostalgic. Unlike other utopian visions of the future and imaginings of the present like that of the short film above, this video leaves out both nostalgia for the past and nationalist connection to place.

## **Violence or Democracy? Discordant Narratives of Independence**

Days and then months after the celebrations in the square were over, in passing conversations with friends and neighbors I gleaned quite different views of December 16, Independence Day, particularly opinions concerning a previous, more violent event that happened on the same date in 1986. After the ousting of the beloved Kazakh leader of the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan, Dinmukhamed Konaev, and his replacement with an ethnic Russian, a group of demonstrators gathered on the central Republican Square in Almaty in fury to protest what was seen as the last straw in a long history of Russian domination.<sup>21</sup> The protest turned violent when Soviet troops stepped in to break up the demonstration. Reports of beatings, mass jailing and even several deaths of demonstrators at the hands of the military police are generally accepted, though the numbers vary greatly. According to the BBC, about 3,000 people took part in the protest.<sup>22</sup> The event and the protest movement that emerged from it now bear the name *Zheltoksan* (Kazakh for “December”). The details of the event were described to me in vastly different ways by different people: one Kazakh friend described it as a brutal police-retaliation on a peaceful student protest; others blamed the protesters for the violence. One of my neighbors, a non-Kazakh, was taken aback when I wished her a happy Independence Day, and replied, “It’s not happy for me, too many unhappy memories.” She described a group of basically hooligans who started the protest, which quickly erupted into violence. She recalled seeing some of her students, hysterical, with blood on their faces, as they were running down the slope from the square to our neighborhood. Many Russians and Russian-language newspaper articles echo the

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<sup>21</sup> Dinmukhamed Konaev, whom Kolbin replaced as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Kazakh SSR, was an ethnic Kazakh.

<sup>22</sup> “Anti-Soviet Stirrings, Timeline: Kazakhstan.” BBC website, accessed July 1, 2008.

belief that the protesters were violent troublemakers, and that the ethnic tensions they ignited only served to interrupt the country's development. Other friends, particularly Kazakh intellectuals, insist that it began as a peaceful protest of mostly young people, students, and intellectuals.

Many Kazakhs use Independence Day as a memorial service for the protesters who died that day in 1986, and before the festivities began on the square, I saw people laying flowers at the feet of the "Golden Man" statue, the symbol of Kazakhstani Independence. Despite the obvious importance of this protest in the lives and memories of many Kazakhstanis, there was no mention of the 1986 protest in any of the Almaty celebrations that I observed. In fact the only reference to the protest on television was in a brief news clip at a monument dedicated to a Kazakhstani citizen named Kairat. I later learned that this was one of the 1986 victims; Kairat was mentioned two years later at the 2006 commemoration.

Independence Day, in any country, is usually a day that marks an emotionally charged and often violent event, an event that not only sparks a change in leadership, but that rips the present from the past and sets it floating towards a new direction. In Kazakhstan, Independence Day officially marks the date when Kazakhstan seceded from the Soviet Union to set up its own state in 1991. But in the unofficial context, this holiday memorializes the uprising in 1986. Independence Day as it is remembered in Almaty is therefore split into two unequal halves. While the actual date of independence in 1991 is central to official celebrations, the more charged and certainly the more contentious remembrance is that of 1986. Until recently, the central government barely recognized the earlier event, and certainly the focus of the official events I attended was on 1991. In the past few years, however, there has been a slight concession to the protest movement that began in 1986. In 2006, the fifteenth anniversary of Kazakhstani



independence and the twentieth anniversary of 1986, Nazarbaev marked the protest and publicly honored its victims with the unveiling of a statue dedicated to their memory. However, in speeches during and after the commemorative events, Nazarbaev and other representatives of the central government stressed that the bloody protest was not (according to them) about ethnicity but about the need for freedom and democracy.

Unfortunately, national hindsight regarding this particular year is not kind to Nazarbaev—another reason he distances himself from the 1986 events. According to one interviewee, Nazarbaev at the time opposed Konaev, the long-standing Kazakh head of the Kazakhstan, and even denounced him to the Soviet central government, while promoting himself as Konaev's successor. If we take this analysis at face value, Nazarbaev comes out looking like Konaev's enemy, a problematic position, as Konaev is generally viewed with fondness and admiration as one who built the foundation for Kazakhstan's success story. In any case, the events of 1986 beg comparison between the two leaders. Konaev, admired by both Russians and Kazakhs, in a way holds the kind of place that Nazarbaev aspires to, as Konaev is viewed as one who led Kazakhstan with diplomacy and impartiality and provided the social and economic stability needed for Kazakhstan to flourish.

While many intellectual Almatyites I spoke to were critical of Nazarbaev, the *oralmandar* I interviewed, on the other hand, expressed much more positive sentiments. At the *oralman* concert, attendees from Mongolia and China praised Nazarbaev as a strong and just leader who built Kazakhstan into a stable, economically viable and technologically advanced country. One young Kazakh *oralman* who has lived in Almaty for two years, said that he was happy living in Kazakhstan, a “democratic” country, as opposed to “communist” China.

Interestingly, he especially stressed his love for Astana—when asked why he replied that it is “my country, my *astana* [*astana* means capital in Kazakh].”

This brings up another important aspect of the 1986 *Zheltoksan* protest—the importance of locality in the construction of national history. Since the establishment of Astana as the new Kazakhstani capital in 1997, the central government has made a rigorous effort to diminish Almaty’s importance in national matters, including Kazakhstani history, and instead establish Astana as the new center. Kazakhstan’s new history, particularly as exemplified by Nazarbaev’s book *The Heart of Kazakhstan*, focuses on Astana (Nazarbaev 2005). One of the benefits of moving the capital is that any old and unwanted associations with the Soviet era can be hastily shed by the current regime. In this context, *Zheltoksan* is problematic not only because it disputes the official meaning and timing of independence, but also because it places Almaty, not Astana, at the center of the independence movements.

The friction surrounding independence can be seen as a tension between collective remembering and forgetting. Clearly, Nazarbaev is trying to distance himself from that time, and place himself in a new place, a new forward-looking capital with virtually no history. Mourners on the square strive to keep the memory of violence and protest alive. The remembrance of 1986 protests thus flies in the face of these official efforts to forget.

## **Conclusion**

This study of independence has thus turned into a study of alternative views of history, mapped ideologies, and political and emotional constructions of time. It is also about the malleability of terms of inclusion and exclusion. In claiming inclusion of many disparate groups, the ambiguous “we” furthers the hegemony of the group in power, thus minimizing opposition and alternative representations. Like the homogenizing trick at work in *Druzhiba Narodov*, the

dominant group folds the interests of smaller groups into their own, forcing opposing views to dissipate as similar views grow closer and eventually indistinguishable from that of the dominant center.

Another aspect I discuss is the use of music and image to tap into a mythologized past, whether a Soviet or pre-industrial Kazakh nomadic past. The overlaid images in the short film *Babalar* and the accompanied focus on Kazakh traditional music as a transformative phenomenon both imply a continuity of the “ancient” past into the present. This folding the past into the present is a powerful emotional tool, and the evoking of nostalgia for an imagined or experienced past can build important solidarities, whether within the context of nation-building (as in the *oralman* video) or within opposition groups (like the memorials to the victims of 1986). Furthermore, in the official myth of a continuous narrative of Kazakh history from ancient times to the present, it is important that this story happens *on the Kazakh steppe*. Thus, *place* also becomes a powerful force. In the transformative experience of the taxi driver-turned-epic singer, it is almost as if Kazakh nationhood is meant to be an irrepressible force that emanates from the land.

In contrast, Saz Otau’s video presents Kazakh traditional music as disconnected from tropes of history, nationhood, progress, and modernity, and suggests a present dislodged from the past and future. Saz Otau’s weird, directionless flight over a featureless desert reminds me of the joke told about Nazarbaev’s 2030 plan of economic development. Q: “How is Nazarbaev like Moses?” A: “He promises salvation and then spends thirty years leading us by wandering through the desert.” I suppose what is interesting about alternative visions like that of Saz Otau, is that it throws into relief Nazarbaev’s vision of Kazakhstan, and makes it just another view of the past, just another facet of the present, just another promise of the future.

In looking at the post-Soviet space, it is important to keep in mind that the narrative of nationhood and modernity, such a staple of nation-building, is only one construction of time-space. As I will discuss in chapter three, it is a narrative held in place with state calendars, maps, and history books, as well as through televised seasonal programs, festival performances, and habits of celebration.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**WINTER IN KAZAKHSTAN**  
**Calendars, Seasonality, and Rhythmicity in Everyday Life**

Winter in Kazakhstan presents a dizzying array of holidays from at least five different calendars. Celebrations of the new year alone pile up one after another in quick succession: January 1, then Old New Year (Jan. 13) and Chinese/Korean New Year, and in recent years the Muslim New Year (and Qurban Ayt) has also fallen in mid-winter. It was partly this coinciding of marked days from so many calendars that prompted me to examine not only individual holidays but also the calendrical cycle as a whole. I began to think more holistically about holidays, about the approach of major holidays and the accompanying pre-holiday advertising, about the seasonal nature of television and holiday imagery. Calendars affect how we experience the day, the week, the year, and induce us to form temporal habits, thereby affecting everyday life in a very tangible way. With their connections to everyday rhythmicity, as well as to politics, history, and ideology, calendars represent a purposeful and powerful ordering of time.

Eviatar Zerubavel describes calendars as temporal maps of marked events in history (Zerubavel 2003:30). Both maps and calendars reflect and affect ideology in their ability to order space and time and affect everyday life. Maps by their very nature treat space unequally, marking and naming certain places while leaving others anonymous. In the same way, calendars *must* reflect an essential bias in that they select certain days as special. Because they mark specific historical events and include newly created political holidays while excluding or replacing holidays of older regimes, calendars betray the political inclinations of their makers, and like maps are essential tools of nation-building. On a larger scale, calendars also emerge from timelines that themselves chart events central to a particular ideology, like the birth of Jesus

Christ. In the same way that maps help map-makers to promote their vision of local, national, global or Eurasian space, calendars promote the calendar-makers' ideological leanings. The ways in which people choose to use national maps and calendars provide insight into how they choose to order their environment, what they think of the national agenda, and, ultimately, how they see themselves.

Eviatar Zerubavel writes about human beings' strong need for temporal order. Schedules, clocks, and calendars all provide a comforting level of predictability, thus contributing to a sense of wellbeing. Ordering time also provides a sense of individual planning and agency in that it provides a level of control over one's environment. Bruno Bettelheim wrote of the "endless anonymity of time" in the concentration camps as a "factor destructive to personality," and conversely, that "the ability to organize time was a strengthening influence. It permitted some initiative, some planning" (Bettelheim in Zerubavel 1981:12). Bettelheim and Zerubavel both describe the ordering of time as vital to personality and identity. If we accept this, it follows that extreme change in ordering space and time deeply affects human beings' social environment, everyday life, and perhaps even, as Bettelheim suggests, sense of self.

### **The Pounding of the "Post-s": Maps, Calendars, and Regime Change**

The birth of independent Kazakhstan in 1991 ushered in the post-Soviet era, a sea-change that brought new maps and street names, a new calendar and newly established holidays. Thus began the double-layered nature of Almaty's streets and calendar year, a phenomenon familiar to those throughout the former Soviet territory. Any foreigner new to Almaty will remark on the presence of two city maps—the newly (post-independence) printed one with the new names of Kazakh heroes, and the mental map that every resident of Almaty must hold in his head, with the old Soviet street names that for the most part still dominate in common usage. Taxi drivers may

know the new street names (though using them will certainly betray your status as non-local) and many residents vaguely know the new names of major streets, but to a great extent it is the old Soviet map that is most often used in conversation. Habits of place-naming die hard. If you grew up going to Elementary School no. 35 on Lenin Street, it is likely that you will not easily call the same street by its new name, “Dostyk” (Friendship). Every favorite corner vendor you passed, every carved up bench, every newsstand, belongs on the street named Lenin, not Dostyk. Streets have such personality that it is difficult to change the name without changing something essential about the place. Just as place is embedded in our body memory and personal history, so too is the experience of time.

The experience of time is patterned and habitual, and extreme changes in schedule or calendar like those that occurred in Kazakhstan after independence have a profound effect on residents. Zerubavel writes about time in cognitive terms, and uses the terms “figure” and “ground” of Gestalt psychology in describing “the way time is perceived and handled by collectivities” (Zerubavel 1981:xii).<sup>23</sup> He explains that we have a continuous perception of rhythmicity—the patterned way that events happen in everyday life (we wake up to the same alarm clock, put on our clothes, start the coffee, see the same people on our way to work). This rhythmicity provides the “ground” in our everyday life. The expected occurrences and usual sequence of events and routine backgrounds contribute to the feeling of rhythmicity. We come to expect this continuity, and therefore anticipate approaching events—holidays, weekends, seasons. If anticipated events fail to come to pass, there is a resultant perception of instability at their absence. New regimes therefore often strive to replace old holidays with new ones on the same date in order to avoid a “felt absence” on that day. Thus the new Kazakhstani regime

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<sup>23</sup> See Kurt Koffka’s classic *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* and also Maurice Merleau Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*.

replaced International Labor Day (May 1), an important socialist holiday, with Unity of Nations Day. The thematic similarity between these two holidays—“international solidarity” in the former holiday and “unity of nations” in the latter—further aids in the success of the substitution.

In my interviews, I heard many accounts describing this perceived absence of holiday celebrations. In one instance, a middle-aged Russian woman spoke nostalgically about bygone celebrations of Maslenitsa, the Russian Orthodox equivalent of Fat Tuesday (or Mardi Gras). She related that there used to be a public celebration of Maslenitsa in the Park Panfilovtsy in Almaty. She said, “They used to make *bliny* [Russian pancakes or blintzes] and have an outdoor celebration there in the park. Though it was cold they would have it outside every year. They would give out *bliny* to all the children.” Park Panfilovtsy is where the ornate Orthodox church stands, in the old center of the city, and on the weekends the sidewalks leading up to the church are lined with Russian *babushki* (grandmothers) begging for alms. The benches in the churchyard are always filled with teenagers and grandparents, and the large open square on the church’s north side offers snacks and games for kids and birdseed to feed the legions of pigeons. It is interesting that Maslenitsa was celebrated in such a public way during Soviet times. A very Russian holiday, Maslenitsa is almost more ethnic than religious, and this woman’s nostalgia for it seemed a remembrance of a more “Russian” era in Almaty.

On one level, the post-Independence calendar change, like the street name changes, created a sharp break with the past, as revealed in nostalgic accounts of Soviet-era holiday celebrations. But on another level—the level of habit—there remained (and still remains) a degree of continuity. While the post-Soviet calendar features a multitude of newly created holidays, the celebration of old holidays was (and is still) commonplace. February 23, Red Army Day, is such a holiday. We went, earlier in February, to a Russian nostalgia-laden restaurant,



Zhili Byli, whose name represents the Russian equivalent of “Once upon a time.” Zhili Byli serves Russian “peasant” food: dumplings, buckwheat groats, and *mors*, thick red juice squeezed from berries. The décor looks like a fairy tale version of the Russian wooden house, and the waitstaff wear *sarafany* (Russian aprons) and embroidered tunics. On that particular evening there were cards on the tables announcing a “surprise” for men on February 23 to celebrate the old Soviet holiday, Red Army Day. In the Soviet era, Red Army Day became a day when men were toasted and hosted—the masculine equivalent of March 8 (International Women’s Day). When my husband asked what the surprise was going to be, the waiter replied that there was going to be a stripper. But when we returned on Red Army Day, no “surprise” appeared. We asked again about the promised festivities and were told that they were canceled for today, but that we should come back again on the new equivalent holiday, May 7, Kazakhstani Army Day, and there would be a similar celebration.

On the same February day we visited some friends at their workplace—two fast-talking, vivacious and brightly-clad professional women, both nearing fifty. We sat for a while in their office, chatting and playing with our three-year-old daughter. After their younger officemate left for lunch, they locked the door to the office. One of them magically produced *zakuski* (snacks to accompany drinking) and the other took out a bottle of vodka from her desk drawer. And so we spent the afternoon. When anyone called, our friends yelled into the phone instructing the callers to try again when they weren’t so busy. Although Red Army Day no longer appeared on the calendar, it clearly still exists in habits of celebration, hidden in desk drawers, and in “surprises” in restaurant advertisements. When I asked friends about the holiday, I received predictably divergent responses. Some said only people of the older generation paid attention to such holidays; others said that it was quite common for men of all ages to celebrate Red Army Day in

bars. Not quite family holidays, and not completely public, these mini celebrations of Soviet-era holidays do not fit into a neat box. They don't have an official place on the calendar, but they are still remembered, marked, it seems, mostly by informal toasting and spontaneous celebrations.

Old New Year is another such holiday; a curious anomaly, it is the only secular holiday still remaining from the old Orthodox Church calendar. The church calendar was used exclusively in Russia before the modern Gregorian calendar was adopted in 1918. Now that the calendar is only used in the Orthodox Church, Old New Year is the lone remnant of a time when that calendar guided secular life as well as the sacred. Much like the leftover Soviet holidays, it is not written on any current calendars, but still holds a place in the annual cycle of Kazakhstani celebrations. One snowy Almaty winter, in mid-January, I wrote in my journal, "Old New Year seems to have survived the century solely through the habits of eating and drinking." Thus, while the change of calendars and the official omission of old holidays can leave a gap in the cycle resulting in a perceived absence, a nostalgia and perhaps a sense of loss, there is a concurrent tendency to continue celebrating the omitted holidays from previous regimes. Like the mental presence of the old Soviet maps, the emotional presence of the old Soviet calendar is still prevalent, whether marked by celebration or reminiscence.

## **Holiday Television: Nostalgia, Consumerism, and Politics**

### ***Holidays and the Concept of "Ground"***

Zerubavel writes eloquently about the habits of eating, drinking, and cleaning that accompany holidays and the Sabbath, and contribute to the sense of weekly and seasonal rhythmicity. He writes that Jewish households clean "toward the Sabbath" and that two scholars in a Jewish community noted that, "by the smell of the street water . . . you can tell what day of the week it is" (Zborowski and Herzog in Zerubavel 1981:18). Similarly, habits of cooking,

eating, and even grocery shopping contribute to our awareness of calendrical cycles. In my household, Thursday is currently soup-making day, and the presence of the giant steaming pot of soup on the stove marks the imminent approach of the weekend and the anticipation of rest. Certain foods, like fresh cranberries appearing in American stores in November, signify the approach of late fall, and carry an association with Thanksgiving. Similarly, pumpkins for Halloween and Thanksgiving and oranges for Christmas are connected to natural growing seasons, and help to ground these holidays in the cycling of the seasons. Other foods are not necessarily attached to a particular growing season but rather to social conventions. When I asked locals here about New Years Day (both Old and New), they generally said the celebration is mostly about feasting and drinking with close relatives and friends, and all agreed that “olive” salad was essential to the feast. Zerubavel also writes about the importance of seasonal grounding of holidays. He writes that, “whereas eating the ‘same’ unleavened bread on Passover helps present-day Jews identify with the ancient Israelites who allegedly came out of Egypt three thousand years ago, the fact that it takes place at the same time of year as the Exodus is specifically designed to make the link between them seem more ‘natural’” (Zerubavel 2003:47).

### ***Winter Television***

In watching holiday television in Almaty, I began to be aware that this medium underscores the seasonal, culinary, and consumptive aspects of holidays, and supports social memory of the Soviet period. Films like *Old New Year* support core ideas about and traditions surrounding the holidays. Much like the viewing of *It's a Wonderful Life* around Christmas in the United States, the annual viewing of Soviet holiday films becomes a part of holiday tradition. By showing stories *about* feasting, television and old films support impressions of seasonal habits of eating and drinking while simultaneously establishing holiday habits of viewership. The film *Old*

*New Year* is about two families' dinner parties on this holiday, and one of the first scenes shows two women preparing the holiday dinner, discussing which salads to make ("olivie" as well as "vinegrette"?). One blogger describes the integration of film-viewing and feasting in his New Years' celebration: "[*The Irony of Fate*] is one of those films that I can watch over and over again . . . and I just can't imagine my New Year day/eve without it, and a bottle of "Soviet" champagne, and Russian salad, and the proverbial jellied fish that Ippolit referred to as 'muck.'" Interestingly, the blogger is not only describing his own version of the New Years' feast, but is also incorporating descriptions by a character (Ippolit) in the film, thus folding the televised feast into his own experience. In this way habits of consumption and viewership come to be linked, and together make up much of what is considered core to the season.

Further, the kind of collective experience of the holidays (represented by collective viewing of old films) is closely linked with social memory. Memory can be purely personal in nature but as human experience is so embedded in social phenomena, memory is often a social, even collective process (Zerubavel 2003). The annual viewing of Soviet holiday films involves this kind of social memory. In hearing songs from the late Soviet period, re-experiencing life in Soviet apartments and Soviet modes of work and leisure, present-day viewers reconnect with Soviet life in a very tangible way. Further, the fact that this viewing is often collective and synchronized with real-life celebrations further connects past ways of celebrating with present holiday celebrations.

### ***Mid-winter and "Sviatki"***

We seem to attach to seasons and holidays certain core concepts, feelings, and characteristics that accumulate, combine, and morph over time. The Soviet films viewed during the holiday season reflect not only Soviet-era modes of celebration, but also include much older

ideas about mid-winter. Mid-winter, along with mid-summer, was considered in Russia, as in much of Europe, to be a magical time. Like important life-cycle transitions (birth, death, and marriage), these two pivotal transitions in the solar cycle (winter solstice and summer solstice) became and remain a focus for rituals and holidays, as well as magic and divination. W. F. Ryan writes,

In Russia, as in many other parts of Europe the time around Christmas and Midsummer were particularly suitable for magic and divination. The practices varied a little locally but the period from Christmas Eve to the Twelfth Night was a time of festivity, which included all kinds of *gadaniia* or divination, sometimes to find out what the new year would bring with regard to the weather or harvest, often to discover a future husband. Of the days in this period the commonest for divination were New Year's Eve and the eve of Epiphany. (Ryan 1999:46)

This period of mid-winter holidays from Christmas Eve to Epiphany was known as *sviatki* in Russia. It is, in literature and television alike, a time when the boundary between our world and the spirit world is thin—a dangerous and liminal time, full of chaos and magic. *The Night Before Christmas*, a 1950s Soviet animated film based on a short story of the same name by Nikolai Gogol, is set in the Russian period of *sviatki*. In this film the devil appears on the night before Christmas and runs wild through the Ukrainian country side—slipping down chimneys, hiding in ovens, playing tricks on lascivious lovers. Liminal times are times when chaos rules, when the ordinary rules of the universe are temporarily suspended. In *The Night Before Christmas*, this inconsistency was evident in a very physical sense—some objects flew through the air while others became extraordinarily heavy—as if gravity was no longer a constant but rather liquid, flexible.

Liminal time involves not only a reordering of time and place, but also of the self. A rift in the “normal” fabric of life, a liminal period is a time for reexamining priorities and reinventing the self, albeit temporarily. Indeed, in pre-Soviet Russia the period of *sviatki* was (as elsewhere

in Europe) a time of mumming and ludic activities that involved “playing” at another self. Ryan tells us, “Yuletide was also the time of various kinds of mumming, cross-dressing, dressing as animals, wearing masks, wearing clothes inside out or upside down, and dramatized rites such as ‘playing at corpses’” (Ryan 1999:46). Unlike everyday life when a “continuous self” is most often required for everyday purposes (see, for example, Zerubavel’s discussion of the resume, which requires a discursively smoothed presentation of past and present selves), *sviatki* allows a jagged, chaotic, discontinuous, contradictory, creative, and uncharacteristic presentation of the self. Just as the ordinary constants of everyday life can no longer be relied upon, so too the self becomes mutable and inconsistent during the dark nights of mid-winter.

### ***Two Wintertime Soviet-era Films***

The chaos of *sviatki*, when looked at through a Soviet lens, is very interesting indeed. Like *Night Before Christmas*, these Soviet holiday films similarly present a picture of mid-winter instability, but it is a subtler version: a sometimes philosophical, sometimes slapstick confusion of time, place, and the self. They address a particularly Soviet sense of place and displacement, focusing particularly on the uniformity of Soviet space. They examine personal aspects of Soviet life and the sense of self, at a time when communal, public life was emphasized. Through this Soviet lens, the liminality of midwinter appears as displacement, confused identities, and a kind of trying on of different lives.

My discussion focuses on two Soviet-era movies that have an important place in current-day Kazakhstani holiday programming: *The Irony of Fate or Enjoy Your Bath* and *Old New Year*, set in Leningrad and Moscow during the Brezhnev era. The Soviet apartment is the (superficial) focus of *The Irony of Fate*. In this Soviet classic, the hero, Zhenya, gets drunk in the bathhouse with his old schoolmates. Then, in going to see his friend off at the airport, Zhenya,

too drunk to notice, is put on a plane to Leningrad by mistake, in place of the friend (also too drunk to notice). Zhenya, upon arriving in Leningrad is not actually aware that he has flown to a different city. He hails a taxi “home,” giving the address of his apartment in Moscow. But Soviet cities being so alike, the taxi actually takes him to the very same address in Leningrad, which looks exactly like his own building. His key works in the lock and he makes himself at home, falling asleep on the couch in the Leningrad apartment belonging to the beautiful and confused Nadia. The plot spins out from this basic misunderstanding, as the two alternately tangle and find compatibilities within each other.

*Old New Year* is a study of two families living in the same apartment block in Moscow around 1980. The first family is well established and intellectual, the second is up-and-coming, newly well off, having just moved into their apartment on this Old New Year’s Eve. The film alternates between the two celebrations of Old New Year in these two apartments, separated by one floor. A philosophical film involving more dialogue than fast-moving plot, it is a study of class in a supposedly classless society. Colorfully disparate dialogue shows the sharply contrasting lifestyles of these two families. Both families are at a turning point in their lives, and in a way, each strives to emulate the other: the intellectual hosts speak about living like the *narod* or “the people,” and the working class family strives to accumulate the possessions that are the mark of the upper class. It is a film about our relationship with the material world—the possessions with which we surround ourselves and the physical structures that house us. It also seeks to understand what is below the surface of materiality.

Throughout both films runs the idea of the Soviet sense of place, the uniformity of the buildings and the overwhelming nature of public life, as contrasted with the intensely personal and protected space of home. *The Irony of Fate* is prefaced by an animated short film about the

proliferation of the Soviet apartment block. An unwitting architect originally designs a beautiful edifice, complete with balconies and curlicue ornaments, which the building committees one by one delete, leaving a plain cement apartment block. Replicas of this building march in legions over Soviet territory, from the Central Asian deserts to the far North, surprising camels and polar bears alike, until Soviet apartment blocks finally cover the entire globe. (Indeed life in Kazakhstan certainly supports this caricature of Soviet architecture, as the view from my window in Almaty attests.)

Following this short cartoon, the beginning of the actual film *The Irony of Fate* interestingly focuses in on an ornately magnificent Russian Orthodox church, covered with snow. The camera then pans out and reveals it to be surrounded and dwarfed by rows and rows of prototypical Soviet apartment blocks. The focus on the church in the context of Soviet architecture can be understood as representing the duality of inner life (spirituality/personal thought) vs. the utilitarian nature of Soviet public life and space. Throughout these films we see a similar contrast, the sterility of the external façade of these apartments, contrasted with their “alive” interior.

The *banya* (bathhouse), which appears in both films, represents an interesting bridge between public and private life. Though strictly speaking a public space, the bathhouse seems to be a realm of the semi-private, a place for philosophical discussions and close-knit celebrations. In *The Irony of Fate*, the *banya* appears to be a spatial catalyst for the unfolding of the film’s events, a bridge into the unknown (just as it traditionally functions as a kind of gateway into the world of magic and spirits), for it is in the bathhouse that Zhenya’s engagement is toasted, and where the small group of friends get him so drunk that he ends up in a different city. In contrast, in *Old New Year*, the *banya* appears at the end of the film and is similarly a place for rather



drunken philosophizing, a place where the characters all rehash the events of the night before and attempt (unsuccessfully) to make sense of them. As Ryan and other scholars assert, the bathhouse is strongly associated with magic in Russian culture. Connected to purification rituals and childbirth, guarded by a *bannik*, the bathhouse spirit, the bathhouse is essentially a pagan place, underscored by the necessity of removing one's cross before entering (Ryan 1999:50). Just as midwinter is a supernaturally chaotic time, the bathhouse is traditionally a site of heightened supernatural activity, and seems to function in these films as a liminal, catalytic space.

The uniformity of the Soviet apartment, and the reordering of this Soviet space, provides the basis for the plot of both movies. In both films, the theme of moving and the rearranging of the apartments' interiors—the making and unmaking of place—figure prominently. Both Zhenya and Nadia in *The Irony of Fate* have recently moved to their respective identical apartments and, as in *Old New Year*, their furniture and possessions are in disarray. In the latter film, the new family is moving its furniture in, while the head of the second household, disillusioned by the conspicuous consumption of the season and the proliferation of his family's own possessions, decides to throw out all of his furniture. As his well-heeled guests arrive, they help to move out every last object in his living room until they are sitting on the floor in the dark (which one of his guests proclaims to be very chic and “modern”) and discussing the true meaning of life. The characters in both movies are in transition and the chaos and disorder in both apartments sets the stage for the reordering of their lives and life priorities.

The theme of mistaken places is key to both films and is in a way the catalyst for these changes. In *The Irony of Fate* displacement happens on a large scale, as the hero mistakes his apartment for another identical apartment in another city. Because of this misstep, Zhenya meets Nadia, rejects his old life (and his previous wedding engagement) and goes through a

transformation from an awkward, hesitant fiancé to an intrepid, persistent lover. In *Old New Year*, the old man who is a guest with the new family continually (and drunkenly) mistakes the intellectual family's apartment for his friends' and repeatedly joins their celebration in an impromptu fashion. He gradually becomes a conduit between the two families as he participates in both ongoing discussions and relates the sometimes-misunderstood dialogue to both parties. In each case, displacement provides an unexpected look into the lives of others and prompts inner reexamination.

Original soundtracks were written specifically for each film, and their songs are integral to the enduring meaning and popularity of these films. Of the "author song" genre popular in the Soviet Union from the 1970s on, these songs, particularly those from *The Irony of Fate*, have enjoyed an enduring and widespread popularity throughout the former Soviet Union. Written for solo voice with accompaniment on the Russian seven-string guitar, with memorable lyrics and simple chord structures, they are still played often at informal gatherings, particularly around the New Year. (At my birthday, celebrated in January, someone broke out the guitar and played two favorites from *The Irony of Fate*. Everyone knew the words.). The lyrics to some of the songs were written by the composer (in typical author-song genre style); others are taken from the works of the great Russian poets such as Boris Pasternak. Two of the songs I discuss are those with lyrics by Pasternak, and his poetry helps to connect old Russian ideas about mid-winter to the Soviet era.

"Snow is Falling," with music by Sergei Nikitin, opens the film *Old New Year*. Set in mid-winter, and replete with architectural imagery, Pasternak's poetry draws attention to the film's focus on place and the season and complements the cinematic imagery of snow-covered Soviet cities.

“Snow is Falling” – Boris Pasternak

Снег идет, снег идет.  
К белым звездочкам в буране  
Тянутся цветы герани  
За оконный переплет.

Snow is falling, snow is falling.  
To the white stars in the storm  
Stretch the geranium blooms  
Across the window-sash.

Снег идет, и все в смятении,  
Все пускается в полет:  
Черной лестницы ступени,  
Перекрестка поворот.

Snow is falling, and all is in commotion  
All is turning to flight:  
The stairs of the black staircase,  
The turn of the crossroads.

Снег идет, снег идет,  
Словно падают не хлопья,  
А в заплатанном салопе  
Сходит наземь небосвод.

Snow is falling, snow is falling,  
Appearing not as snowflakes,  
But as the dome of the sky  
Falling to earth in a tattered coat.

Словно с видом чудака,  
С верхней лестничной площадки,  
Крадучись, играя в прятки,  
Сходит небо с чердака,

Looking like the crazy person,  
Who lives upstairs,  
Creeping, playing hide and seek  
The sky descends from the attic,

Потому что жизнь не ждет.  
Не оглянешься, и - святки.  
Только промежутки краткий,  
Смотришь - там и новый год.

Because life doesn't wait  
Don't look back, and – *sviatki* is here.  
Only a short span of time,  
You look, and the New Year is there.

Снег идет густой-густой,  
В ногу с ним, стопами теми,  
В том же темпе, с ленью той  
Или с той же быстротой,  
Может быть, проходит время?

Snow is falling thickly,  
Is perhaps time passing,  
In step with it, following along  
At the same tempo, with the same laziness  
Or with such speed?

Может быть, за годом год  
Следуют, как снег идет  
Или как слова в поэме?  
Может быть, проходит время . . .  
Может быть, за годом год . . .

Maybe, one year after another  
Follows, like the snow flies  
Or like words in a poem?  
Maybe so too will time pass.  
Maybe, one year after another.

Снег идет, снег идет,  
Снег идет, и все в смятении:  
Убеленный пешеход,  
Удивленные растения,

Snow is falling, snow is falling,  
Snow is falling, and all is in commotion  
The whitened pedestrian,  
The surprised plants,

Перекрестка поворот.  
Снег идет, снег идет.

The turn of the crossroads.  
Snow is falling, snow is falling

Снег идет, снег идет.

Snow is falling, snow is falling.

This song is about the period of *sviatki* and the peculiarly contemplative nature of winter. It describes how the narrator's private inner thoughts meet the external world. It is interesting that Pasternak writes very specifically in this poem about *sviatki*: "Because life doesn't wait. Don't look back, and *sviatki* is here. Only a short span of time, you look, and the New Year is there." Underscoring the idea of *sviatki* as a time when things are out of place, Pasternak describes the falling of the snow, and its obscuring qualities. "Snow is falling, and all is in commotion [confusion, or disarray]." "All is turning to flight: the stairs of the black staircase, the turn of the crossroads." He writes about perception, how the snow obscures and confuses objects and places, and generally creates the impression of chaos. Objects and places seem to be "turning to flight," becoming unmoored from their usual context. The next stanza continues, "Snow is falling, snow is falling, as if it is not snowflakes that are falling, but rather as if the dome of the sky is falling to earth in a patched-together coat." So while earthbound objects are seemingly "turning to flight," the sky is "falling to earth," in a reversal of their usual state. Again, displacement, and a shift in the natural order, appears as a theme of mid-winter.

The poem, "No One Will Be at Home," also by Boris Pasternak, appears in the song of the same name in the film *The Irony of Fate*. The song is composed by Mikael Tariverdiev and performed by Sergei Nikitin.

"Никого не будет в доме"  
Борис Пастернак

Никого не будет в доме. Кроме сумерек.  
Один зимний день в сквозном проеме  
Незадернутых гардин. Незадернутых гардин.

Только белых мокрых комьев быстрый промельк  
моховой, только крыши, снег, и кроме  
Крыш и снега никого. Крыш и снега никого.

И опять зачертит иней, и опять  
Завертит мной прошлогоднее унынье  
И дела зимы иной. И дела зимы иной.

Но внезапно по портъере пробежит сомненья дрожь.  
Тишину шагами мера. Тишину шагами мера.  
Тишину шагами мера, ты, как будущность войдешь.

Ты появишься из двери в чем-то белом, без причуд,  
В чем-то, впрямь из тех материй,  
Из которых хлопья шьют. Из которых хлопья шьют.

“No One will be at Home”  
-Boris Pasternak

No one will be at home. Except dusk.  
One winter day in the drafty opening  
Of undrawn curtains. Of undrawn curtains.

Only the quick mossy flash of white wet clumps  
Only roofs, snow, and besides the  
Roofs and snow no one . . . Roofs and snow no one.

And again the frost scribbles, and again  
I am spun by last year's sadness  
And the things of a different winter.

But suddenly along the door curtain a tremor of doubt ripples.  
Measuring the silence with footsteps. Measuring the silence with footsteps.  
Measuring the silence with (your) footsteps, you, like the future, will enter.

You will appear from the door in something white, without whimsy,  
In something just like the kind of material  
From which flakes are sewn. From which flakes are sewn.

The use of architectural language in both songs stresses the attention to place and also contributes to the feeling of liminality. Pasternak uses quite specific (and difficult to translate) architectural vocabulary, like “portiere” or door curtain, windowsash, transom, and “aperture.” And not only do these now slightly archaic words evoke the interior of an old Russian home, so striking against the visual backdrop of Soviet architecture, they also convey a state of suspension

or in-betweenness. The structures he describes—windows, doorways, stairs—are all inherently transitional spaces, from the outside in, from one room to another, from up to down. Furthermore, his poetry stresses not the structures of place themselves, but what is happening within, and particularly *through* these architectural spaces. The geraniums “stretch past the window-sash to the white stars in the storm,” and (in the poem “No One Will Be at Home”) “along the door curtain a tremor of doubt ripples,” anticipating an arrival.

Time is also an important liminal element in these poems. In “Snow is Falling,” New Year’s Eve is depicted as a kind of temporal doorway, a transition that makes us aware of the passing of the years, the passing of time. Pasternak’s words speak to the elasticity of time. He writes that time may pass “with a lazy tempo, or with such speed,” and continues, “Maybe one year will follow another, like the snow flies, or like words in a poem. Maybe so too time will pass, one year after another.” Time flows not in straight lines, but chaotically, in spurts, like the falling of snow. Like space, time, too, is in disarray. In “No one will be at home,” winter both obscures the outside world and throws the inner world into confusion, in which the experiencing of disparate times overlap: “And again the frost scribbles, and again I am spun by last year’s sadness, and the things of a different winter.” Pasternak’s poetry, replete with architectural language and seasonal imagery, reveals time and place as not concrete but mutable, subject to perception. And though his words, like the Soviet films they accompany, describe the external world, they are really about the inner life of human beings.

In *The Irony of Fate*, the liminality of *sviatki* and the New Year lifts the mask, suspends one’s ordinarily consistent persona, and allows uncharacteristic and confused presentations of the self to emerge. Ippolit, a normally upright and sober professional man, starts to come apart at the seams when he realizes that Nadia is falling for Zhenya. Ippolit returns again and again to

Nadia's apartment, the last time completely drunk—"Ippolit! This is the first time I've seen you like this" (Nadia); "This is the first time I've been like this" (Ippolit). When Zhenya suggests a trip to the *banya*, Ippolit proceeds to take a shower, fully clothed, with his fur hat on, in Nadia's bathroom. He even asks them to scrub his back. It is the incongruity—the wrong combination of person, activity, place, and "costume"—that makes the scene so funny. All of the aspects of the scenario—being drunk, being Ippolit, being fully clothed, taking a shower, going to "*banya*"—taken separately are part of "normal" life; it is this particular combination that makes the scene ridiculous. Like wearing clothes inside out or donning a mule's head, the displacement of objects, people, and activity is characteristic of midwinter (and midsummer) play-acting. Further, the scene makes Ippolit seem "wrong" (crazy, drunk, bizarre) and Zhenya and Nadia "right" (sane, happy, fated for each other).

Thus the liminality, the "uncommonness" of mid-winter creates a chaotic upheaval in the everyday. The chaos that displaces people and things also creates channels between these separate spheres/lives (between Zhenya and Nadia, and between the two families), opening up new possibilities and ways of looking at life. But, in the true sense of liminal periods (Victor Turner), there is also a return to normalcy once the liminal period is over. Thus, as dawn breaks in the New Year, Nadia pronounces, "New Years is over, and everything remains in its own place," and insists that Zhenya must return home to Moscow. Similarly, after the magical craziness of Christmas Eve in *The Night Before Christmas*, the devil is banished and village life returns to normal. We are left with the impression that this chaos does not change anything permanently; rather it provides depth, revealing what is under the surface of everyday life.

These films thus include threads from an older conceptualization of winter, *sviatki*, while simultaneously presenting a very Soviet picture of the season. The Soviet apartments (and by

extension, lives of Soviet individuals) are depicted as uniform and interchangeable, and the swapping of lives, roles, and apartments underscores the superficial uniformity of Soviet life and space. At the same time, the examination of mid-winter as a chaotic period of transition provides a glimpse into the inner lives of individuals. These films thus show both sides of the coin: the communal, uniform, utilitarian nature of public life, as well as the inner, personal, and protected space of home and inner thought.

### ***Film-Viewing as Holiday Tradition***

The viewing of the film *Irony of Fate* is embedded in winter celebrations across the former Soviet territory and the film, along with its songs, has grown into a phenomenon of Tolkien proportions. Many people I spoke with described it as being an essential part of the holidays. Roman Fedossev writes in his blog on IMDB:<sup>24</sup>

This film has celebrated its 30th anniversary on this 2006 New Year[‘s] Eve, and there was a special programme about the creation of the film, actors etc. Apparently, the whole country (then USSR) watched it when it was first shown in 1976, and they wanted to see if the rating would be the same 30 years later. I have to say, I have been watching this film religiously since [my] early teens every New Year and when I moved to live in the UK, the video recording of “Ironiya” [Irony of Fate] was one of the essential items I brought with me. It’s one of those films that I can watch over and over again, [an] instant mood lifter, and I just can't imagine my New Year[‘s] Day/Eve without it . . . On my way back from Moscow to London in January, I tried to purchase a DVD copy in the airport but was told by the assistant that they are permanently sold out!!!” (Roman Fedossev, rfed@mail.ru)

From the same website, a blogger from Ukraine writes: “I love this movie. I watch it every 31st December with my family” (spaceblossom). A blogger from Latvia adds, “Watching this movie has become a tradition each new year in Latvia . . . Another thing that amazes me is

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<sup>24</sup> The Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) is a comprehensive database that includes film details as well as commentary by visitors to the website.



the way the system of Soviet Union is sho[wn]. All the situations are unpredictable and one can really enjoy the characters and the way . . . they [solve] their problems” (soviet chick).

This film, and in general the tradition of watching certain Soviet films during the holidays, has helped to maintain a cultural bridge between the former Soviet republics. Much like shared holidays marking important events in the history of the Soviet Union, like Victory Day (May 9, which I discuss in chapter five), shared traditions of viewership function as ties to the past. Holiday television programming continues viewing habits started in the Soviet period. Films like *The Irony of Fate* and *Old New Year*, so evocative of Soviet life, seem to feed a nostalgia for the Soviet past, but also provide continuity, a bridge over the great jagged edges of the political “Transition.” Thus television viewing, and the annual viewing of Soviet films contribute to a rhythmicity of the holidays, underscoring core ideas about mid-winter and solidifying cultural connections. Zerubavel writes that shared temporal rhythmicity helps to create solidarities. In some ways, this synchronized annual viewing of Soviet films in the former Soviet states helps to serve as a reminder of their shared history and culture.

### ***Television Advertisements***

The seasonal grounding present in holiday films is also present in advertisements and public service announcements aired during the winter holidays. Television essentially brings the seasons inside, making the viewers constantly aware of winter and using it to attach certain feelings and ideas to the winter holidays. The familiar themes of love (and sex), feasting, and magic or synchronicity reappear in these ads. Television ads, always adept at connecting seasonality and consumerism, use core concepts about winter to sell their products. An internet advertisement portrays a young man and young women setting off to the ski slopes in a jeep. When the jeep runs out of gas, a couple of snowmobilers swoop down to pick up the women,

while the guy is left stranded with his defunct vehicle. The last shot shows another snowmobiler, a caricature of a gay man complete with earring, winking at our stranded hero and gesturing to the back of his snowmobile. The parting message: don't get stranded without power; use our internet services. Their logo then appears, "when you have the desire, you will have the ability." Obviously, the double-entendre is about sexual prowess, equating the ability to connect to the internet with the ability to perform. A bit of a stretch from ski slopes to the internet, but the ad successfully evokes the attractive combination of winter trysts and youth culture.

Another ad—for Pathword, a popular mobile phone service provider—is similarly evocative, though more romantic than macho. This ad evokes another staple of winter holidays—magic. As sepia shots of winter street life pass by, with couples walking together, window-shopping, and ice-skating, hearts appear sketched in soft red between them and halos above their heads. Very "It's a Wonderful Life," the ad evokes warmth in the cold, the first flash of romance, and magic appearing in everyday places. A third ad also uses the backdrop of winter sports, but this time with a "family" theme—mayonnaise. This ad shows a rosy-cheeked boy just down from the ski slope sitting down to eat, and prominently features the Aroma brand of mayonnaise, with a message about using Aroma condiments for holiday meals. These ads all successfully weave winter themes into their sales pitch, using a variety of ideas connected to the holiday season—namely sex, romance, and family feasting—to promote their products.

Another theme of holiday programming appears in the form of public service announcements aired by the political party Asar (All Together), headed by Dariga Nazarbaeva, daughter of the current president, Nursultan Nazarbaev. Featuring short holiday stories, these political advertisements/public service announcements combine Asar's general emphasis on "family" (Asar's logo was a red roof, indicating its family-centric politics) with a very timely

political platform—environmentalism. Two of Asar’s advertisements focus on the tradition of decorating New Year trees—the Soviet-era morphing of Christmas trees (in an effort to capture their various meanings, I will call them Yule trees). The first of these vignettes opens with a scene of a lively winter gathering in the middle of a snowy forest. Young people decorate the live trees with ornaments and tinsel while a table is set with oranges and champagne. It is New Year’s Eve and the countdown is approaching when a rough-looking man sneaks up to one of the trees menacingly brandishing an axe. Two of the young people rush to save the tree from his axe, scolding the man, and later (no hard feelings) inviting him to join the celebration. One of the rescuers was dressed as the Russian fairy tale character, Snegurochka, Father Frost’s granddaughter. As midnight strikes, Father Frost himself appears, and leads a merry chase through the forest to the tune of “Jingle Bells.”

The music accompanying this public-service/political advertisement is a newly composed pop ballad that gives a new twist to the Russian children’s tune, “In the Forest a Yule Tree was Born.” Written to publicize the ban on cutting down fir trees for the New Year, the song’s lyrics are as follows:

“Little Green Yule Tree”

Our holiday approaches,  
There is a holiday bustle in the city,  
And all rush to buy a beautiful tree for their house.

And thousands of trees  
For thousands of people  
Bring happiness, but only for a few days.

Refrain:

Little green Yule tree . . .  
Do not cut down trees anywhere in the world.  
Little green Yule tree, don’t bring her pain.  
Little green Yule tree, preserve her for the children.

You wouldn't see a dressed up beauty, and tear out her eye.  
The clock is striking twelve and we must make our wishes in time.  
The wishes of each person are fulfilled by the holiday hour.  
We all love life and so let her live too, among us.

The short video message combines holiday images (“dressed up beauty,” “the holiday bustle of the city,” wishes for the New Year) with an environmental message. Again the key link—here, between environmentalism and the holidays—takes place on an emotional level, in the urgent emotional appeal to save the evergreens. More than just a public service announcement, the fact that this video clip was actually backed by a challenging political party (although one with obvious connections to the regime in power) indicates that environmentalism was an expedient political platform for Asar—one that attracted the young voters in particular.

The second of such messages, also sponsored by Asar, is about a young mother and her son. It is an animated short with a similar theme, this time stressing family as well as youth appeal. The animation has an early 1960s retro feel, with clean lines, simple color schemes, and a pretty hourglass mama, very reminiscent of American Christmas specials like Charlie Brown's Christmas. The young mother is out in the woods with her son decorating a small snow-covered tree with red ornaments, as friendly forest animals (rabbit, squirrel, fox, and hare) gather to watch. Suddenly a man jumps out from behind the tree with a saw in his hand, but the next moment, in clever comic twist, he takes out a violin bow and starts playing the children's song “In the Forest a Little Yule Tree was Born” on the saw.

“In the Forest a Little Yule Tree was Born”

In the forest a little yule tree was born,  
In the forest she was born,  
In winter and summer  
She was strong and green,  
In winter and summer  
She was strong and green.

The breeze sang her a song  
Sleep, little yule tree, sleep!  
The frost covered her with snow:  
“Be careful, don't freeze!”  
The frost covered her with snow:  
“Be careful, don't freeze!”

The timid little gray rabbit  
Hopped around under the tree.  
And from time to time the wolf, the  
angry wolf, loped by.  
And from time to time the wolf,  
the angry wolf, loped by.

Oh! The snow-covered forest  
On the fields something scraped  
A horse with shoed hooves  
Came hurrying, running.  
A horse with shoed hooves  
Came hurrying, running.

The horse pulled a sleigh  
And on the sleigh was a driver.  
He cut down our yule tree  
Right down to the roots.  
He cut down our yule tree  
Right down to the roots.

And here she is all dressed up  
Come to visit us for the holidays.  
And many, many happinesses  
Has she brought the children.  
And many, many happinesses  
Has she brought the children.

Both advertisements manipulate the children's holiday traditions, using the well-known children's song (and its pop incarnation) as a springboard to address environmental issues and at the same time target a young, family-oriented audience. One of the reasons that environmentalism works so well in this medium is because of the central role that the forest, and the natural world in general, plays in folklore about Ded Moroz, the Russian Father Frost. Unlike Santa Claus, an industrial-era character who heads a factory (an interesting idea in itself), Ded Moroz is basically a spirit of the forest. In contrast to benevolent depictions of Santa, the folklore and plays I have seen about Ded Moroz portray him as a fierce and sometimes frightening protector of the woods. The state puppet theater in Almaty annually shows the play "Morozka," about the little girl who became Snegurochka. In this play, Morozka is kind to the animals in the wintry forest, giving her gloves to the rabbit, and her hat to warm the fox, while her naughty step-sister steals the sleeping bear's horde of berries and ignores the pleas for help from other forest animals. In the end, Morozka is rewarded with furs and jewels, and becomes Ded Moroz's helper and adopted granddaughter, while her selfish stepsister is left to freeze in the wintry forest. The entire play is set in the snow-covered forest, and like all Soviet children's plays about the New Year holiday, prominently features forest animals as main characters. The song "In the

Forest a Yule Tree was Born” takes the forest as its setting and, like the play *Morozka*, takes a protective, almost motherly stance toward the natural world, and the forest in particular. In this song, the Yule tree is in need of protection, the snow provides a blanket for her through the harsh winter, the wind sings a lullaby to her and the forest animals befriend her. The environmental advertisements above very cleverly lean on this protective stance present in folklore about the winter holidays. In incorporating the children’s song about protecting the Yule tree, these advertisements tap into a larger body of holiday folklore to support its environmental/political message.

Winter as a theme is rich with imagery, history, and folklore. I have been interested to see how its many facets have been highlighted in Kazakhstani television, which provides a Soviet perspective on the holidays while also connecting to older Russian ideas about *sviatki*. In bringing the seasons inside, television and films underscore basic ideas from folklore and *sviatki* traditions, as well as modern ideas about Christmas and the New Year, and weave these into other holiday activities—like drinking, feasting, and singing.

### **Religious Calendars and Temporal Segregation**

Unlike New Year celebrations, which seem to permeate all aspects of Kazakhstani life in mid-winter, the important Muslim holiday of sacrifice, Qurban Ayt (or Eid al-Adha) maintains a very low public profile in Almaty. Because the annual cycle of the Muslim calendar is made up of 354 days, the Muslim holidays shift yearly in relation to the Gregorian calendar, and because of this, Muslim holidays are not regularly associated with a cluster of adjacent holidays, although Qurban Ayt did coincide with the winter holidays in 2005. Based on lunar rather than solar cycles, Muslim holidays are not seasonally grounded. Some scholars suggest that the Muslim calendar was originally separated from the solar year in order to distance Muslim holidays from

pre-Islamic celebrations. Zerubavel (1981:18) writes about temporal segregation, and how disparate yearly or weekly cycles can serve to provide temporal boundaries and effectively separate communities from the rest of society. In writing about the Christian and Jewish Sabbaths, he notes that having different days of rest creates temporal segregation, and different rhythmicities for those communities. He also notes that Easter was very painstakingly made to *not* coincide with Passover, which was, of course its origin.

Muslim holidays are not very public events in Almaty. This may have to do with their separate temporal cycle, but is certainly also reflective of the Kazakhstani state's non-religious stance and Almaty's cosmopolitan population. Few references to Qurban Ayt appeared on street banners and billboards; among the exceptions was Ramstor, the popular, Western-style, Turkish owned supermarket, which hung banners of congratulations.

Qurban Ayt is primarily a family affair, when observant, or only slightly observant Muslim men attend mosque and well-off Muslims slaughter a sheep and distribute the meat to poor neighbors and relatives. When I asked Almaty Kazakhs about Qurban Ayt, everyone insisted that it was not "our" holiday, and that it was celebrated more in Uzbekistan. However, when I asked friends from rural areas of Kazakhstan, they said that on Qurban Ayt Kazakhs *must* go to mosque and sacrifice a sheep for the poor. In any case, the only family I knew who celebrated Qurban Ayt were Kazakhs from Xinjiang, living in the rural outskirts of Almaty. In visiting them, I realized that unlike in the city, Qurban Ayt was clearly visible in the countryside—on the roadside the snow was covered with patches of red, and hand painted signs advertised sheepskins for sale. We spent the night at their house, with neighbors and relatives periodically stopping by to join the family in the celebrations.

I also attended a concert on Qurban Ayt held at the Palace of the Republic in central Almaty. The large hall was full to capacity and the attendants were of all different ages, from young children to the elderly. As I arrived early and the concert began, in true Kazakh style, almost two hours late, I had ample opportunity to watch the crowds. The audience was not typical of Almaty, and I suspect the crowd was made up largely of *oralmandar* and locals from Almaty's rural outskirts. Many attendees were primarily Kazakh-speakers and generally dressed in a less cosmopolitan style than the usual Almaty crowd. Some women, even teenagers, wore headscarves, generally quite uncommon in the city. Some men were in skullcaps and many elderly women wore the Kazakh white headdress traditional for married women. This was the single event I attended in Almaty where I felt unease as a woman with my head uncovered. Additionally, I was perhaps the *only* non-Kazakh in the audience.

The group, *Yassai*, was named after the well-known Sufi philosopher and saint Akhmed Yassai who lived in the area that is now southern Kazakhstan. The ten male performers wore green, the color of Islam. I later learned that the group's leaders had attended the Almaty conservatory in the late 1980s, and formed the group in the early 1990s. The music was beautiful, sung *a cappella* in five- and six-part harmony. The words were taken from Sufi texts, though some of Yassai's other recorded songs combine layers of Kazakh lyrics with verses from the Qur'an. Though this event was advertised as a concert, I had the sense that it was truly an insider event, intended for observant Muslims.

Christmas Eve is also primarily a religious event and a family affair in Kazakhstan, and the Christmas Eve service at the church in Park Panfilov was very well attended, particularly by young families and teenagers. Indeed, the church almost seemed to be a kind of a teenage hangout. Of the groups I interviewed, one very young family (the parents looked to be in their



early twenties) said that Christmas Eve was very different from New Year's Eve, and that they only celebrated it in church. I asked them if they went to church during Soviet times, to which they replied, "Yes, of course, it was completely normal." I asked, "When was this?"—"1980s." From two other people (one woman in her forties and a man in his sixties), I received a very different account. They both spoke about the repressiveness of the Soviet era. The woman talked about going to church with her grandmother as a child, though secretly, because her father was a party member. They also both described the family dinner that takes place after the church service. In both cases they said these were small celebrations—no guests, just family—cozy, joyful occasions.

Interestingly, the older man I interviewed explained that the younger generation is the impetus behind the popularity of Orthodoxy now. Older family members, brought up atheist in the Soviet era, are often first introduced to church by their adult sons and daughters. He noted that his daughter is active in the church and first persuaded him to attend services several years ago. The crowd around the church was strikingly young, mostly 30s and younger. Many teens, with piercings and dyed hair, whisked in and out of the church in small groups. Three beautiful young women crossed themselves elaborately, in synch, at each doorway as they exited the church, and again outside the church. They stood shoulder to shoulder and executed these perfectly orchestrated gestures, like dancers in a music video, poised and self-possessed, cognizant of having an audience.

The private nature of religious holidays in Kazakhstan stands in contrast to those in other countries like the United States, where holidays of the most prominent religions (Christmas and to a lesser extent Hanukkah) have become mainstream, commercialized, and institutionalized, celebrated in schools, offices, and other public places. This can be understood partly as a result

of the staunchly secular stance of the Kazakhstani state. But additionally, it has to do with the atheism of the Soviet era. The mainstreaming and resultant commercialization of the New Year holiday in Kazakhstan, and its prominent place in mass culture, is a direct result of its widespread celebration in the Soviet era. The secular nature of virtually all winter holidays appearing in public and in mass culture is clearly related to Soviet atheist habits of celebration. Thus the current emphasis on a secular state and the legacy of Soviet atheism combines to alienate and separate religious holidays from the public sphere.

### **Korean New Year and the Kazakh Zodiac**

Kazakhstani Koreans, who were forced under Stalin to migrate to Kazakhstan from their native Soviet Far East, have remained a small but visible minority, particularly in Almaty, where Korean cafes, restaurants, and grocery stores abound. While Korean New Year is, like the religious holidays described above, primarily an in-group affair, it seems to enjoy a slightly more public face, and the celebrations strongly resemble those of New Year's Eve, incorporating characters and traditions from Soviet New Year festivities. I attended a gala event for Korean New Year, held at the opera house for prominent members of the Korean community in Almaty. The event included Korean dances, a few skits in Korean, the traditional Soviet New Years skit with Ded Moroz (Father Frost), and finally the appearance of Kazakhstani premier pop-diva Roza Rymbaeva. I was a little surprised that though the Korean holiday festivities were relatively circumscribed—the event was exclusive, not publicized, and requiring invitations—they were also somehow generic. Like many of the articles in Almaty's Korean newspaper, *Kore Ilbo*, which often mirrored nation-building messages in their articles on holidays, the Korean New Year event was more popular and commercial than nationalist. Most of the event was conducted in Russian, with a short skit in Korean. In the lobby a live band played big band hits and some

middle-aged couples were dancing ballroom-style. There were fancy goodie bags with glossy magazines and perfume donated to the event. Many people knew each other and the atmosphere seemed almost familial. While this was a somewhat exclusive event, mostly for Koreans, it was not very ethnocentric. I spoke with a Kazakhstani Korean acquaintance about Korean New Year in Almaty, and he was very deliberate in emphasizing that Korean traditions are not strong in Kazakhstan, and that there was no special way of celebrating the lunar new year. Although the celebration I attended clearly catered to ethnic Koreans, its connections to the business world and the presence of New Year's traditions clearly stressed mainstream culture over ethnic connections.

Interestingly, the sign of the animal year from the Eastern lunar calendar has been incorporated into other Kazakhstani winter holiday celebrations, as well. 2005 was the Year of the Rooster, and the image of the Rooster appeared in holiday celebrations and on holiday banners all winter, from January 1 to the lunar New Year to Maslenitsa. I took this at first to be a nod to Korean culture, as Koreans are a very prominent community in Almaty. Or perhaps, as Kazakhstani friends have suggested, it leaked into the Soviet mumming traditions during the Soviet era. Seasonal children's skits always include forest animals (from the Russian mumming tradition), and the zodiac animals were easily incorporated into this cast of characters. A skit I observed in a holiday celebration at the Almaty State Puppet Theater was a typical example of the many I attended. In this New Year's skit, the children, dressed in animal and angel costumes, sang New Year's songs, and then were encouraged to call out "Snegurochka!" and "Ded Moroz!" First Baba Yaga (the witch from Russian fairy tales) appeared dressed as Snegurochka, and was then discovered and entreated to release the real Snegurochka. After Ded Moroz finally arrived, the Monkey (Year 2004) appeared and was subsequently chased away by the Rooster

(Year 2005). In this way, the characters from the Eastern zodiac were incorporated into the mainstream New Year's tradition, whose function was essentially to part with the old year and welcome the new.

I have thus far written largely about mass culture in Kazakhstan, which, particularly in winter, leans heavily on Russian-Soviet traditions. In an effort to counterbalance the weight of Christmas and the New Year, I turn to Kazakh scholars writing about Kazakh conceptions of the calendar and the seasons. Here, the Eastern zodiac, which as I have discussed is very prevalent in Kazakhstani mass culture, provides an apt point of departure as it carries important alternative meanings for some Kazakh scholars.

According to Kazakh ethnomusicologist Asiya Mukhambetova and other Kazakh and Soviet scholars, the sixty-year calendar, which is made up of five twelve-year cycles (and which is known in the West as the Chinese zodiac) originates not in East Asia but in Central Asia. Mukhambetova and others assert that it is a Tengrian<sup>25</sup> calendar, originating in the region of the Altai (the mountains that lie between Kazakhstan, Siberia, and Mongolia), and is an integral part of the nomadic tradition and lifeways there.

Like Zerubavel, Mukhambetova discusses calendars and the ordering of time as an important basis of community. She writes,

Conceptions of Time are one of the basic foundations of any civilization. They bring together its [civilization's] many faces, putting them together into a structural whole through the unifying forces of their temporal code. Systemic

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<sup>25</sup> Tengri is the god of the animist beliefs prominent in this area before the advent of Islam. Still present in parts of Inner Asia (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Siberia), Tengrianism, or animism, is a form of nature worship, which holds that spirits reside in every stream, mountain, rock and tree. Believers leave offerings at sacred springs and trees, tying pieces of white cloths to branches and stones. In Tuva, "sonic offerings" are given, in the form of throat-singing, which often imitates animals, birds, or even streams within these places (see Theodore Levin's *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing: Sound, Music, and Nomadism in Tuva and Beyond*, 2006).

understandings of Time, as a rule, are concentrated in calendars, which . . . coordinate all aspects of life. The calendar carries the basic information about time-space and appears as a structural genetic code of culture. (Amanov and Mukhambetova 2002:11)

So for Mukhambetova, the structuring of time in the form of calendars (and zodiacs) is a core base of “culture.” In describing the “genetic code of culture” Mukhambetova refers to a “Tengrian ethnos.” Her writing clearly invokes Eurasianist Lev Gumilev both by using his term “ethnos” and in her discussion about how climate and terrain affects and *effects* culture and society. Mukhambetova continues,

The nomads made this complex calendar in order to survive conditions of the extreme continental climate of Central Asia. It was one of the necessary bases regulating the . . . economical, political, spiritual and cultural life, and also the rhythm of the personal life of the individual—in a word, all aspects of life in nomadic society. The animal calendar fulfilled these functions because it was based upon a profound study of the Cosmos and its affect on earthly life. (Amanov and Mukhambetova 2002:14)

For Mukhambetova, the calendar or *mushel* essentially emanates from nomadic life. Conditioned by extreme continental climate, dependence on weather conditions and other natural forces, nomads needed to predict weather far into the future. A particularly catastrophic climatic event was *zhut*, a hard spring frost that left the tender green grass inaccessible to herds, and made movement to other pastures impossible. A *zhut* could mean starvation for an entire group of mobile pastoralists and their herds. Because inclement weather could spell success or disaster for very large groups of people traveling together, weather predicting was a highly prized and specialized skill, which was one of the main duties of the clan’s astronomer, or *esepshi*. So the *mushel*, for Mukhambetova, encapsulates all of this—Kazakh conceptions of nature, seasonality and nomadic lifeways, which also form the basis of Kazakh nationalism.

While mobile pastoralism has become less common in Kazakhstan, Kazakhs in Mongolia and parts of northwest China are still at least partly nomadic. Kazakh nomadic seasons are

divided into four parts: *küzeu*, the fall migration period, *kistau*, the winter campground, *kökteu*, spring migration, and *zhailau*, the summer campgrounds. Though scholars of the region describe many different kinds of mobile pastoralism, this pattern seems to be the most common among Kazakhs.<sup>26</sup> Many herd-owners in Mongolia live in permanent dwellings in the winter and move to *zhailau* with some or all of their family members into the high pastureland in the summertime. In Kazakhstan, though mobile pastoralism is now fairly rare, it still holds cultural meaning. Many aspects of mobile pastoralism—cooking and eating outdoors, entertaining and sleeping in yurts, and the importance of the herd animals in everyday life—are not so far removed from modern life, even for city dwellers. Many Kazakhs in the countryside own land and herds and it is fairly common to sleep, entertain, and host relatives in yurts erected nearby the family home in the warm summer and autumn months. Urban Kazakhs often have firsthand experience with life in the countryside from visiting relatives in the *aul* (village).<sup>27</sup> Quintessential aspects of nomadic life like the *zhailau* and *zhut* are well known to city and country-dwellers alike, and often appear in Kazakh television, films, and music videos.

Kazakh conceptions of seasonality often appear in nationalist contexts. This is more visible in spring when the “Kazakh” (Central Asian) holiday of Nauryz dominates public and institutional celebrations. At this time, themes of pastoralism such as the first milk of spring, the springtime clearing of streams and natural springs, and greeting the first dawn of the vernal equinox, appear frequently in celebrations and on television. Winter depictions of Kazakh seasonality are less common, but the following music video, *Shekerim*, by Tamara Asar, vividly

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<sup>26</sup> Some groups moved four times, having four basic camp grounds, one each for spring, summer, fall, and winter, but many Kazakhs in the nineteenth century, partially as an adaptation to semi-nomadic life, had two basic camping places, the summer campground (*zhailau*), and the winter campground (*kistau*), moving between them during the spring and fall (Olcott 1995: 90-98).

<sup>27</sup> “*Aul*” is a term that now means “village” or “countryside” but which also refers to a settlement of people, i.e., a unit of people who nomadize and camp together.

depicts a nomadic experience of winter. This video is set in a wintry forest covered by deep snow. The yurt is looks warm and protected from the cold, as light from the hearth fire fills the yurt, and the walls and floors are covered with rich red carpets. Two aging grandparents are at home with a mother and her young son. The video alternates between the snowy forest and the yurt's interior, as the young mother (Tamara Asar), sings the song *Shekerim* to her absent husband. Outside, she is draped in thick furs, surrounded by the spectacular scenery of the wintry forest. Inside she reads from an ornate Qur'an, holds her sleeping son, and braids her long hair. There is a feeling of dormancy, of waiting, as she scans the forest, looking for signs of her husband who is out hunting.

Wintertime survival depended on meat rather than milk products and the hunters' success was therefore important to augment the household stores of dried meat. Inner Asian mobile pastoralists traditionally switched from dependence on meat products to milk products around March, marking the end of the long winter and the beginning of spring. While spring and fall are periods of change and motion, *zhailau* and *kistau* (summer and winter camping periods) are contrastingly static times for mobile pastoralists. If summer is a time of plenty, when herders relax and celebrate in large communal groups while the animals fatten up in the rich pasturelands, winter is contrastingly portrayed here as a time of relative isolation and uncertainty, dependent on chance and the whims of nature.

Often these "historical" music videos bring in elements of animism, showing the work of shamans and totems, with humans transforming into and communing with wild animals. Interestingly, though such animist themes would be a natural connection to this story of the hunt; instead, the main belief system reflected in this video is Islam. The reading of the Qur'an is prominently shown here throughout the video. This strikes me as quite unusual for this genre, as

Islam does not appear often in music videos, except in those produced by music groups that are consciously religious, like Yassau. It is interesting that Islam, and particularly the contemplative reading of Muslim texts, appears in this context. Like the Russian imagery of mid-winter, Tamara Asar's video reflects a kind of temporal suspension—waiting for the resuming of “normal” activity.

## **Conclusion**

In focusing on calendars, zodiacs, and the celebrating of the winter season, this discussion has examined how humans experience and order temporality. Celebrations, films, and advertisements are interesting avenues for this analysis, as they seem to reflect both conscious and unconscious attitudes toward winter. Similarly, children's skits and banners portray an amalgamated and multi-faceted representation of winter holidays. Holding the legacy of Soviet culture and habits as well as strains of post-independence nationalism, holiday imagery and celebration in Kazakhstan are historically layered and multivalent. Like the eastern zodiac, which alternately signifies nomadic mythology (and the Tengrian “ethnos, a la Lev Gumiliev) and an inclusive adoption of East Asian traditions, such imagery supports a range of ideologies, from Kazakh nationalism to Eurasianism and the “Friendship of the Peoples.” Reflected in Kazakh scholarship insisting the zodiac should be called by its Central Asian name, *mushel*, thereby acknowledging its Altaian roots, it is clear that temporal ordering also reflects spatial ordering. Using the *mushel* consciously as a Kazakh calendar not only supports the idea of a Kazakh conception of “big time” but also, in a way, reorders the globe, placing the Altai (and the region of Inner Asia) at the center. Like maps and place-naming, calendars—and the celebratory marking of time—are both political and personal, emplaced and embodied reflections of personal and national beliefs.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### NAURYZ

Nauryz, the “Central Asian New Year,” has become perhaps the longest and most widely celebrated holiday in Kazakhstan. Of pre-Islamic Zoroastrian origin, Nauryz is celebrated throughout Central Asia, as well as in Iran, Azerbaijan, and parts of Turkey and the Caucasus. Zoroastrians were sun-worshippers and Nauryz, occurring on the vernal equinox, is a celebration of the sun’s return after the long winter and the arrival of spring. Capitalizing on Nauryz’s indigenous origins, public Nauryz celebrations and televised programs feature a heightened presence of Kazakh nationalism, traditions, and language use, all of which support Kazakh-centric nation-building policies. In contrast to this undercurrent, there is a counter trend, in which satire, globalist tendencies, cosmopolitan sensibilities, and the play of alternate identities rub against Nauryz’s nationalist image. While the alternative portrayals tend to occur on a more personal level, in a sense they mirror the state’s twin pursuit of nationalism and globalism. Anna Lowenhaupt-Tsing’s concept of “friction” aptly captures the rub between these ideologies; I use the concept to examine both how “friction” catches “global flows” in the context of local interactions, and how “friction” can be used to express a kind of “schizophrenia” within individuals caught between competing ideologies.

The first part of this chapter looks at the state’s promotion of Kazakh history and traditions during Nauryz, as well as the underlying nationalist ancient-modern dichotomy present in Nauryz events and programs. The Kazakhstani government’s recent efforts to establish lineage with an ancient past bleed into cultural events and celebrations, a process particularly evident during Nauryz. Sak-era motifs, Chingizid references, and twelfth-century Islamic texts appear under an umbrella of claimed “Kazakh” cultural heritage. Underpinning the recent quest to

uncover the “ancient” roots of Kazakh culture is a large-scale policy of ethnic redress undertaken by the Kazakhstani government shortly after independence. A Kazakh-privileged policy aimed at counteracting centuries of Russian hegemony in the region, ethnic redress has taken several forms. First, since independence there has been a concerted Kazakhization of the state, infusing every level of government with greater numbers of ethnic Kazakhs. Second, demographic redress, which I have written about in previous chapters, aims at repatriating ethnic Kazakhs from other countries in order to achieve titular majority. And third, Kazakh culture has been promoted through the funding and engineering of cultural and historical projects.

Through various institutions, including academia, elementary education, and state-controlled media, the privileging of Kazakh culture, and the effort to connect modern Kazakhstan with an ancient past, has become prevalent in pop culture and commercial advertising, from cigarette boxes to SUV commercials. Edward Schatz writes that in the 1990s,

Newspapers routinely devoted ample space to explaining ethnic traditions and covering Kazakh cultural events. In academia, any topic that covered pre-Soviet [Kazakh] history . . . received blanket endorsement. According to several informants of the Institute of History and Ethnography, the Institute’s director, a powerful ally of Nazarbaev, issued an order (*instruktazh*) to researchers to find the roots of Kazakh statehood in the Sak period (first millennium BCE). (Schatz 2004:82)

The fruits of these labors are now plentiful: Sak-era motifs appear everywhere from the local televised weather report (which shows the local temperatures on the right as Sak jewelry decorates the left of the screen) to Kazakh music concerts, and have come to signify Kazakh nationhood. Archeological digs, ethnographic and linguistic studies, and historical reconstructions are still continuously being carried out by academic institutions, and are well funded by the state. Many scholars therefore have striven to bridge Kazakh history (which, by most accounts only begins in the fifteenth century) with that of Central Asia’s oldest

civilizations. Two children's encyclopedias of Kazakhstan, commissioned by the Kazakhstani Ministry of Education and Science and published in 2003 and 2004, highlight the following: archeological finds from the Sak era, the eleventh-century carved stone statues in central Kazakhstan, the tomb of the twelfth-century Sufi Yassau, which was recently restored in southern Kazakhstan, as well as later Kazakh heroes like Zhanibek (Zhanaidarov 2003; Zhumakhanov, et al. 2004). In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science sent scholars and linguistic experts to India to peruse the Mughal texts concerning the rule of the great Mughal emperor, Babur, apparently with the intent of identifying their linguistic roots (ostensibly as more Turkic than Persian, and thus closer to the Kazakh language).<sup>28</sup>

Another rich source of Kazakhstani historical reconstruction is the Tamgaly petroglyphs in the Semirechie region of Kazakhstan, 170 kilometers from Almaty. With carvings dating from the second century B.C., these images, including depictions of warriors, hunting scenes, animal sacrifice, childbirth, and sun idols, appear often in advertisements, television, concerts, and movies. The petroglyphs appear significantly in the historical movie *Kiz Zhibek*, which was aired on Nauryz. Before the big battle scene, the heroes pray before the petroglyphs and carve their own names into the cliff face. Interestingly, there is actually a wall of petroglyphs at Tamgaly that were made specifically for the movie. Many television programs and concerts feature images from Tamgaly and a kind of runic script is often used when advertisers want to index ancient Kazakh roots. The petroglyphs appear often on the *Kazakhstan* channel, most noticeably in its logo—a petroglyph image of a rider on horseback carrying a flag. One interesting advertisement for the channel shows various petroglyphs morphing into thumbnail videos depicting scenes of

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<sup>28</sup> Both Chagatay Turkic and Persian were in use in the Mughal Empire. Persian was the language of the urban population and the literate elite, while Chagatay was more common among rural Turkic peoples of the region and was Babur's native language. He wrote the *Bāburnāma* in Chagatai Turkic.

contemporary Kazakhstan, including images of scientists, universities, factories, and oil wells. The emphasis is on development and advancement, a teleological progression from ancient history to modern day.

Many Nauryz events include the solar images present in the Tamgaly petroglyphs, using the indigenous Zoroastrian roots of Nauryz and the theme of sun worship to bridge the ancient and modern celebrations of the holiday. The set for the *En Men Enshi* (Songs and Singers) concert, which took place at the Republican Palace in Almaty on Nauryz, featured large floor-to-ceiling sun god images painted on hanging translucent screens. The concert was largely comprised of pop singers and the light show lit up the screens with flickering colors, changing with the mood of the songs. In one act the petroglyphs seemed to dance in a psychedelic frenzy of green, pink, and yellow bubbling colors.

Despite this use of solar imagery and a general sense of the ancient origins of Nauryz, the holiday's Zoroastrian roots are not widely known and there is substantial confusion over its origin. Indeed, Nauryz is often associated with Islam, a connection supported by the state in media events such as the opening of the Islamic Cultural Center (and mosque) on Nauryz in 2005. It is interesting that the solar petroglyph images are included in Nauryz public events while the Zoroastrian roots are generally forgotten. Zoroastrianism, originating in Central Asia, was a prominent religion in Persia and remains culturally relevant in Iran, though it has long been replaced by Islam in Central Asia. Zoroastrianism is now closely associated with the Persian world and the settled oasis culture of Central Asia, rather than that of the northern nomadic Central Asian Turks. It is perhaps for this reason that the Zoroastrian roots of Nauryz are downplayed in Kazakhstani celebrations. Instead, the associations highlighted are connected

to the seasonal lifeways of Eurasian mobile pastoralists, including the first birthing of lambs and other livestock, the first milk of the spring, the clearing of natural springs after winter.

A documentary program, *Traditions of Kazakhstan*, aired on Nauryz in 2004 highlights these connections. The channel Mediaset, which tends to feature cultural programs produced in a documentary, academic, and slightly colonialist-explorer style reminiscent of *National Geographic*, aired twin programs on Kazakh traditions, one in Russian and one in Kazakh, though the topics covered were somewhat different. The Kazakh program included a section on childbirth and fertility, followed by a section on Nauryz traditions. The film on Nauryz was presented in an ethnographic style, filmed in a mountainous pastureland and featuring Kazakh nomadic family life, with participants in traditional Kazakh dress. The first section was followed by this passage:

The Kazakh people kept the traditions of nomadic life until the 1930s. Their way of life, spiritual richness, poems and songs were all connected with the specifics of nomadic life. And the appearance [color] of the grass and the heavenly sphere (the sky) the Kazaks called by one word: *kök* [pronounced “cook”].

Had winter passed? Are the herds all right? The earth has freed itself from its wintry cover, and most importantly, the sheep have finally fattened up. If the livestock is healthy and well, then everything else, everyday life and existence, goes well. When everything turns green, the herds’ newborn animals bring happiness and good fortune. Usually, after the first birthing [of livestock], people go out to the pasture. In the ancient understanding of the nomads, a person’s age is determined by the number of times he has met the spring.

Since ancient times, Nauryz was considered the beginning of the year, and the main dish of this holiday is Nauryz *közhe*. It is prepared with seven ingredients: wheat, millet, milk, meat, salt, water and *kurdiuk* [mutton fat from the rump]. This signifies: unity, prosperity, success, good fortune, and health. Making *közhe* with the colostrum [the first watery milk] of cows who have just given birth, and inviting guests to share it, is considered an ancient tradition.

The ethnographic film focuses on aspects of nomadic life: Tengrism (Central and Inner Asian animism or nature worship), the dependence on livestock, seasonal renewal, and the spring

birthing of the flock. Particularly interesting was the reference to the first milk (colostrum) of newly lactating cows. Milk and milk products are especially important in Nauryz celebrations, and the first milk of spring after the livestock birthing is considered to have almost magical qualities. One practice at Nauryz is to sprinkle milk on newly planted trees while reciting a *bata* or blessing. The mention of the Kazakh word *kök* is also significant. Literally translated as blue or green, it is a Tengrian concept that describes living things and resists simple translation. The sky is *kök*, eyes may be *kök*, spring greenery is *kök*, but another word used to describe inanimate objects (*zhasył*: green). *Kök* comes directly from Tengrism, implying something sacred. The word for spring, *köktem*, contains this root.

News programs also highlighted traditions associated with seasonal nomadism, birth, and renewal. The *Kazakhstan* channel aired a news story about a gathering in Astana on Nauryz morning in which participants conducted a practice known as the “awakening of a spring”:

Astanites began the morning of Nauryz with the folk wisdom “Bulaq közin ash or “Open your eyes, spring [natural water source].” Since 8 A.M. the people gathered at the spring believe the superstition that [this will ensure that] the year will be prosperous and happy. In Astana, the planting of saplings on Nauryz has acquired particular popularity. Twenty saplings planted on the grounds of the central mosque were named after babies born on this day. Elders gave their blessings. Thus, the twenty Astana seedlings, having received nourishment from mother earth, in proof of their existence, rapidly begin to stretch to the blue sky.

In the words of the mayor [of Astana], Ömirzaq Shukeev, “Nauryz is based on good traditions, which should be continued. It’s a holiday of renewal, of youth! The greatest news for nomads is considered the appearance on the earth of a new baby. Therefore we wanted this tradition to take form in the city and in the country.”

The continuation of Kazakh tradition, as seen in ethnographic films and media events like the planting of trees in Astana, was supported by “ethnographic expeditions” undertaken as part of the larger cultural-historical project of ethnic redress promoted by the state. Schatz writes about these “ethnocultural expeditions” undertaken in 1998, which were generously funded by the state. “Instructed to spotlight ethnic cultural traditions, teams of scholars were dispatched to

each of the fourteen *oblast*'s to examine which sayings and proverbs, traditions, customs and toponyms had persisted into the post-Soviet period" (Schatz 2004: 83). Such expeditions, which sought to document and preserve Kazakh traditions that seemed to reflect those of a pre-Soviet era, came on the heels of a larger political imperative. 1998 was declared the "Year of People's Unity and National History." As Abish Kekilbaev, the Kazakhstani secretary of state at that time, described, the stated aim of 1998 was to "systematize all historical events and phenomena, revive historical memory and provide spiritual cleansing. This is necessary in order to deeply recognize and to better understand the many-centuries aspiration of the people to state independence, unity, freedom of spirit, and human dignity" (Kekilbaev in Schatz 2004:84). Kekilbaev's words imply that through the "revival of historical memory" and promotion of historical and cultural projects, the Kazakh people could "forget" the Russian/Soviet legacy, erase its residue from their cultural past and begin to reclaim their cultural heritage as their own. Documentary films like that which I discussed above clearly reflect this directive. Interestingly, they are not necessarily accepted as a current part of Nauryz celebrations. A young woman (a Kazakh-speaker from Astana) who watched the ethnographic film on Nauryz with me commented, "Wow, I learned so much about Nauryz!" She then cautioned, "You know, Maggie, no one actually celebrates Nauryz this way." This leads me to wonder whether such films are really bridging the gap between ancient and modern. The goal after all seems to be to try to present Kazakhstani traditions as an unbroken line, not a revival of long forgotten pre-Soviet traditions.

More recent films place Nauryz traditions within the context of "modern" life. Instead of taking a purely ethnographic angle, they are presented as stories of current-day Kazakhstan, with little didactic vignettes injected into the storyline, apparently to educate about Nauryz traditions while at the same time indicating that these traditions are still "alive" in Kazakhstan. A made-

for-TV movie produced in 2005 and shown on Nauryz on the *Kazakhstan* channel is set in the *aul* (countryside, or Kazakh village). It opens with a young boy just waking on Nauryz morning to the sound of Nauryz “carols” or *saumalyq*. He opens the door to find several young boys, his friends from the village, singing *saumalyq*, as his mother distributes candy to them. He opts not to participate in the caroling, and the film that follows revolves around his gradual social involvement in Nauryz alongside his growing crush on a fellow classmate.

In another interesting scene, the boys, cavorting outside, present impromptu skits about Nauryz. The scene opens on a gentle sloping hillside golden with last year’s tall grass, and the main action takes place around a group of famous stone sculptures called the Karkaraly stones (*Qarqaralydaghy balbal tastar*), which appear mostly in Almaty *oblast’* (province) and date from the ninth century. In the first skit, called *Tülik zhyry* or “Epic of the animals,” the boys each play the role of an animal of the Eastern zodiac. Their recitations are as follows:

1. [Mouse]: Listen, people, I will be the head of the year. Who are you next to me? . . .

2. [Cow]: This year’s eyes are [as small as] a little finger! Don’t pay attention to robbery; there is no trickery; don’t keep secrets. As I command it, I am the Cow. I will be the head of the year.

3. [Tiger/Snow Leopard]: I am strong! I fight with anybody who attacks me, and defend the others. And who are you [in comparison with me]?!

4. I am the Hare [Rabbit], I am not a coward, and also harmless. A lot of snow falls during my year. I feed the people’s livestock. There is good sowing (harvest of hay) in my year. I will be the head of the year.

5. [Snail]: My deeds are respected among insects. I am a snail, suitable for the beginning of the year. I drag my long tail. Beware! I am a snake.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Ulu* literally means snail, but many think it is a permutation of the dragon in the Chinese calendar. Another theory holds that this zodiac sign was originally a Wolf, as the Kazakh word for howl (*uluu*) closely resembles this word.



6. I am the great pockmarked Snake. I am treacherous. Don't stand in my path. Give me the beginning of the year.

7. The Horse is the wings of men, and is always with humans. I am transportation, and my milk—*kymyss* [fermented mare's milk]— has healing properties. No one can compare with me.

8. I am the humble Sheep. Many people praise my years. In my year there is much good fortune. And in the year of the Monkey, there is *zhut*.<sup>30</sup> The beginning of the year will be prosperous if it is mine.

9. Yes, I am a monkey. Don't tell anyone about my harmful/negative character. In my whole humorous being, I am the most careful and prudent of all. Who is better than me? I will be the head of the year.

10. I am the winged Rooster. I feel all dangers. In the morning I wake you with my crowing, in the evening I call you home. Wherever we go, we always return to our people. We are responsible for the beginning of the year.

11. [Dog]: I can withstand the cold. At night I guard the livestock from wolves who run at a trot. And I do it without compensation. The year of the Dog is a good year. I will be the head of the year.

12. [Pig]: And don't forget about me. Don't leave me out of the year. When I come I squeal, and you run away, afraid. I am also needed. I will be the head of the year.

This scene is related to a Kazakh legend in which each of the animals is vying for primacy in the calendar. Each tells Tengri (god) why he is the strongest and most important to Kazakh life. Finally it is decided that the calendar will be divided into twelve-year cycles, with each animal in charge of one year. To decide which will head the first year, it is agreed that the animals all go to the top of a hill, and the first one to see the sun will be the first animal in the zodiac. The mouse climbs onto the camel's<sup>31</sup> back and from this high vantage point manages to see the sun first, winning the contest. It is interesting that the calendar is brought into this film, as

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<sup>30</sup> *Zhut* is a late spring freeze, a very dangerous condition for Inner Asian nomads.

<sup>31</sup> The Camel sometimes appears in place of the Horse in the Kazakh zodiac. Because both camels and horses are riding animals and provide milk products for Central Asian nomads, they are sometimes interchangeable in Central Asian stories.

it highlights Nauryz as New Year—not just in a seasonal sense, but a calendrical sense as well. While Nauryz is often portrayed as a seasonal beginning—the beginning of spring, the start of new life, with the new growing season and the birthing season among the livestock—this was the first time I saw it connected to the zodiac.

A second skit portrays a struggle between summer and winter. Two boys, one dressed as Summer (with a halo of greenery encircling his head) and the other as Winter (dressed in layers of clothes), present a mock battle between the two seasons, to determine whether spring will start. After circling each other threateningly, each improvising a short speech about their relative strengths, Summer overcomes Winter, bringing about the end of winter's reign and the beginning of spring. This dramatic portrayal of spring's beginning reflects the dualistic nature of Tengrism. Tengrian traditions and Inner Asian folklore (including that of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Siberia) often feature pairs of opposites: black and white, good and evil; similarly, Nauryz is celebrated as the balance between night and day, the vernal equinox as the seasonal pivot between the summer and winter solstice. While this scene clearly reflects the indigenous belief system, it is also very reminiscent of other current Kazakhstani New Year's Eve children's plays, in which the animal of the coming year challenges the animal of the old year (in 2004–05, it was the Rooster and the Monkey). This chasing away of the old year was a staple of Soviet children's performances. It is significant that it appears here in a Nauryz skit as well, connecting Nauryz through performance to other New Year celebrations.

A particularly didactic moment in the film occurs when the children climb a hill on Nauryz morning to pick snowdrops, the small white first flowers of spring, and they happen upon a withered old man sitting high up in a treetop. It is the Kazakh storybook character Qangbasha, whose name means “tumbleweed.” He asks a number of riddles to which the

children must supply the answers, all of which have to do with Nauryz (e.g., about the ingredients in Nauryz *közhe*, the significance of Nauryz). In this way—through skits, games, and storybook characters—lessons about Nauryz are conveyed and its traditions naturalized through a modern setting. While a number of these traditions are, I have been told, in use in rural areas (particularly Nauryz caroling, and the tradition of climbing a hill at dawn on Nauryz morning to welcome the first sunrise of spring), others are not common in Kazakhstan. The origin and historical correctness of such “traditions” are perhaps not as important, for our purposes, as the setting and style of the film. Like the made-for-TV movie aired on Independence Day that I describe in chapter two, this short film manages to weave instructional lessons about Kazakh culture into a current-day storyline. By presenting these skits and riddles within the context of a story of a boy on the verge of pubescence and his life in the *aul*, and interweaving these vignettes into the story of his crush on a schoolgirl, they help to make such traditions “real” and accessible. Unlike the documentary style of the films produced in the late 1990s, these made-for-TV movies aim to connect Kazakh traditions to the present, rather than relegating them to the nomadic past. At the end of the film, the boy’s older brother, played by a Kazakh pop star, sings a song about love and romance. Such injections of modern Kazakhstani life help to distance this film from the frozen, timeless style of the ethnographic documentary, and present instead a strangely flexible sense of Kazakh life and Nauryz traditions.

### **Satire, Comedy, and “Friction”**

While some Nauryz events reflect a straightforward Kazakh nationalism, embracing the unbroken ancient-to-modern timeline put forward by the state, others present a more satirical view of Kazakh traditions. En men Enshi, a concert held during Nauryz at the Republican Palace, is an annual event featuring an impressive lineup of Kazakh pop singers. In 2005, two

announcers provided commentary and comic banter between performances of such national stars as Karakat, Indira Rasykhan, and Makpal Zhanpeisova. In one such exchange, one announcer brought up the subject of Nauryz, and they proceeded to discuss related traditions such as the making of Nauryz *közhe*, a kind of porridge/soup of grains and meat. One commented (as any Kazakh will tell you) that Nauryz *közhe* has seven ingredients: wheat, millet, milk, meat, salt, water and *kurdiuk* [mutton fat from the rump], but was contradicted by the other who protested, “modern *közhe* now has eight ingredients. The eighth is ketchup!” While many Nauryz programs give the impression of an “ethnographic present”—an unquestioned and unchanging permanence of cultural traditions—others, like this comedy routine, take a more complicated view of the holiday, acknowledging the somewhat problematic presentation of Nauryz as ageless.

Another act in the En Men Enshi concert was presented as a traditional *aitys*, an improvisatory competition between two “*aqynlar*” (poet-singers), played by comedians, who spar verbally while accompanying themselves on *dombra*. The two announcers each called out one *aqyn* in the following skit:

Ann1: Serzhan, I have a personal *aqyn*, whom I praise, look after and prepare for competitions like this. I’m a teacher.

Ann2: You can’t be an *aqyn* yourself but prepare another man?

Ann1: You don’t know the whole of my ruse. I will tell you about it, acquaint you with my creative work. And now we’ll see my apprentice.

Ann2: Which *aqyn* is he? [Who is he?]

Ann1: Oy, just wait, I will let you know in good time. He is a little like that [pointing his finger to his head, indicating “crazy”].

Ann2: Like that?

Ann1: Sometimes he can’t stand still and acts nervous. And if his competing rival is unworthy, he will destroy all of us here.

Ann2: Who? Us?

Ann1: You and his rival.

Ann2: You are mistaken if you think that I that he will get the better of me. And I have an *aqyn* too! Let’s have a competition!

Ann1: OK!

Ann2: Call your *aqyn*!

Ann1: Where is my *aqyn*? Hopefully he didn't get nervous and go away somewhere.

Ann2: Call him!

Ann1: He doesn't come out to just any invitation [i.e., you must address him respectfully]. Respected gentlemen! Dear spectators! My personal *aqyn*, sportsman, karateist, footballer, boxer—Dora!

[The *aqyn*, Dora, comes out dressed in gym clothes and begins doing exercises, bending into a squat and lifting his *dombra* over his head as if in weight training.]

How are you? Are you ready? Ok, bend . . . enough . . . . You are not in training, why do you dance like you're in a disco? [Addressing the second announcer:] Call him!

Ann2: Conqueror of many competitions, Ulan-Ude!

Ann1: That's your *aqyn*?

Ann2: Yes, he is. Take your seat, whoever came first.

[“Ulan-Ude” is dressed in traditional Kazakh dress, complete with a Kazakh felt hat topped with an enormous feather. As there is only one chair, Dora sits, leaving “Ulan-Ude” standing.]

Ann1: [to Dora] Hey, play more quietly, you woke up a sleeping hunter. Play quietly!

Dora: In honor of Nauryz, with honest and kind intentions I welcome you my friends! *Ayay, ayay, ayay*...

Ann1: [to Ulan-Ude] Sit please.

[Ulan-Ude looks around and sits cross-legged on the floor next to Dora's chair]

Ulan-Ude: So now I will sing “*ayay*”! I bow and welcome my people! Then I bow and welcome my earth! And then I bow and welcome my rival! I come from abroad.

Dora: The eagle-owl feather sits too high on the head. Careful, the airplane can bring it down!

Ulan-Ude: I'm an *oralman*, who arrived here, who misses his own people and homeland. I bow to my homeland. I will bow for the sake of my people and take knowledge. I bow to the people of Kazakhstan and if need be I will kiss the stones of your people. Kiss stones . . . kiss stones . . . Where are the stones? Do you have them?

Dora: No, there are none here.

Ulan-Ude: If there are no stones, I will kiss the head of the *aqyn*! [Kisses his rival's bald head].

Dora: People of course can't refuse a greeting like this. Friends, now Yuldash [Ulan-Ude]! I didn't bow like him, because we have nervous heads!

Ulan-Ude: I learned to welcome people, and it's proof of my creative work, my bowing to you. If it's not enough, I will bow in French!

Dora: He tries to turn somebody's head, let's see! But I greeted you and I have finished my speech.

Ulan-Ude: Hey wait! I want to greet you, but you run away! Anyway I will catch you and greet you.

The contrast between the *oralman aqyn* from Mongolia and the local *aqyn* is striking. The local *aqyn* is dressed in a tracksuit, while the *oralman* is in traditional dress, including a hat with an enormous feather, which his opponent ridicules. The *oralman* ridiculously bows to everyone on the stage, then to each corner of the audience, and even tries to greet each member of the audience separately before the hosts stop him. He is associated with tradition and a kind of down-to-earth naiveté, while the Almaty *aqyn* is condescending and modern, joking that an airplane might crash into the tall feather in the *oralman*'s hat. The *oralman* sits cross-legged on the floor, while the Almaty *aqyn* sits on the chair. The mention of stones is interesting too, implying an affinity with natural surroundings and possibly a reference to the Karkaly stones discussed earlier. The *oralman*, however, uses this to ridicule his urban counterpart, saying in the absence of stones, he will have to kiss the bald head of his opponent. The ribbing highlights the *oralman*-local divide, which is premised on the general (though somewhat flawed) understanding of *oralman* Kazakhs as rural, more traditional, and closer to nature, while the local Kazakhs are thought of as condescending, out of touch with their roots and their land, and too caught up in cosmopolitan culture.

This comedy routine brings up interesting aspects of diaspora politics and Kazakh nation building. First, it highlights the undeniable culture clash and mutual resentment between *oralman* Kazakhs and local Kazakhs. While local Kazakhs complain that *oralman* Kazakhs receive special considerations from the state (the Kazakh government rewards *oralman* Kazakhs monetarily for their “return” to Kazakhstan), *oralman* Kazakhs for their part are often dismayed at their chilly reception in Kazakhstan and at the lack of adequate job prospects once they arrive in their supposed homeland. Further, the frequent portrayal of *oralman* Kazakhs as rural and

uneducated must be contrasted with the reality that many of these returnees are in fact highly educated, multi-lingual, well traveled, and cosmopolitan.

Second, the diasporic aspect of Kazakh nation-building brings up another facet of the traditional-modern dualism inherent in nationalism. Because areas like Bayan-Olgi in western Mongolia are relatively remote, they are perceived as containing more “authentic” Kazakh traditions and language use, particularly in that they have not been influenced by Russian culture as their co-ethnics in Kazakhstan have been. For this reason, some of the recent ethnographic expeditions, like one by Kazakh music scholars from the Kazakhstan Academy of Sciences in 2005, have been to regions like Bayan-Olgi, to see if more “pure” versions of Kazakh culture actually exist outside of Kazakhstan’s borders. This sets up an interesting time-space relationship in which the traditional-modern dichotomy takes on spatial dimensions, with Kazakhstan representing the image of “modern” Kazakhs, globalism, technology, and the future of the modern Kazakh life, while the outlying Kazakh regions in other states stand as a repository of Kazakh culture, traditions, and folklore. In short, outer Kazakh regions represent the past; Kazakhstan the future. Thus the movement of *oralmandar* into Kazakhstan represents a kind of flow of the past traditions into modern life, the gathering of the Kazakh past to support and strengthen current Kazakhstani nation building.

Reflected in the clash between *oralman* and Kazakhstani, between nationalist sentiment and satire, between competing identities in a single individual, and between conflicting ideologies in one political program (e.g., nationalism and globalism), is something that Anna Lowenhaupt-Tsing describes as “friction.” She uses the term to describe a “stickiness,” the grip of the local and tangible, in what is often described as a frictionless process (cf. the term “global flows”). In aiming to problematize the discussion of globalization by bringing in the instability,

inequalities, and uncertainty in transnational interactions, she introduces “friction” as a necessary part of globalization—one brought about by cultural difference, geographic distance, and power disparities inherent in the so-called global capitalist system. She writes, “This book is about aspirations for global connection and how they come to life in ‘friction,’ the grip of worldly encounter. Capitalism, science, and politics all depend on global connections. Each spreads through aspirations to fulfill *universal* dreams and schemes. Yet this is a particular kind of universality: It can only be charged and enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters” (Lowenhaupt-Tsing 2005:1). While Lowenhaupt-Tsing uses “friction” to describe transnational interactions, it can also be used on a personal level, to describe the ways in which individuals represent themselves.

A recent article in the *New York Times* portrays this friction between “global” and national identities. The article describes reactions to an attack on young Indian women at a bar in Mangalore in southern India. After the attacks sparked a public debate over pub culture, mall culture, Valentine’s Day, and the influence of Western youth culture in India in general, the journalist reported this interview with two sisters at a bar in New Delhi:

The sisters . . . suspected that there was quiet approval among many Indians of the Sena mob that assaulted the women in Mangalore.

“Urban India may criticize it,” Kirat Rawel said, “but there is a certain section of India that believes in it.” . . .

Sanah Galgotia, 21, nursed a beer and recalled this story: She had been walking home around midafternoon recently when a car full of men slowly followed behind. Furious, she turned around, shouted and banged on the car window, only to have the driver try to run her over. She escaped and ran home. When she got there and recounted her ordeal, her mother asked why she had pursued the aggressors.

To Ms. Galgotia, the episode demonstrated the “schizophrenic” attitude of Indian women—alternating between being assertive and subservient and then judging



others for tilting one way or the other. She is guilty of it, too, she said. When she sees a woman who smokes in public, she sizes her up instantly.

“In India, no matter how modern you are, you’re still in this schizophrenic nonmodern thing,” she said, straining to be heard as the D.J. blasted Pearl Jam.

She looked around and wondered aloud whether she and her friends were simply “trying to ape the West.” That set off an argument.

Her friend Murphy John, 21, shook his head. “I’m wearing a jacket, not a dhoti-kurta,” he said, referring to the traditional Indian draped pantaloons and tunic, “because I like wearing a jacket. It’s globalization.”

“We are globalized in our lifestyle,” Ms. Galgotia responded, “but very Indian at heart. I know I am.” (Sengupta 2009)

The schizophrenia that the sisters describe in this article is similar to the kind of alternate identities that appear in Kazakhstan performances. Like the satirical *aitys* described above, several Nauryz performance events include various schizophrenic portraits of the performers. One of the most interesting of these concerns the famous Kazakh singer Nurlan Abdulin. In one music video, “Vesnya” (spring, in Russian), Abdulin seems to be donning his Russian cloak. The video portrays a very Russian celebration of Maslenitsa, the Russian Orthodox Fat Tuesday (Mardi Gras). The video opens with a horse-drawn troika carrying a small group of musicians rushing through a birch forest in early spring. There is a spring snow on the ground, the leaves are just beginning to bud and the Russian musicians (*balalaika*, *bayan*, and guitar) play exuberantly as the *troika* lurches through a narrow parting in the trees. The mood of the video is effusive, and the cultural references very Russian. The Maslenitsa celebration takes place in an *izbushka* (Russian wooden house with ornate carved decorations) and the party guests are all in Russian traditional dress. With the Russian red of the costumes swirling against the spring snow, the music driving a frenzied acceleration, and the Abdulin singing a bawdy love song, the video is an exuberant celebration of Russian spring.

Another video by Abdulin, “Mukhida Shamida,” aired on Nauryz on the *Kazakhstan* channel, is a complete contrast. The song is sung in Kazakh, uncharacteristic for Abdulin, who is primarily a Russian-speaker. It portrays an historical meeting of four Kazakh leaders on the steppe. The mood is somber and the theme clearly nationalist. It is an awkward fit for Abdulin. His Kazakh pronunciation is not great, and the words are difficult to understand, even for native Kazakh speakers. Based on the thematic content and visual images, I would characterize this as a “historical” video, a genre that usually features Kazakh folk songs, or newly-composed songs performed in the Kazakh vocal style, with long, drawn out notes, embellishment, and melodic turns), and a tense, and slightly yodelly vocal style. Abdulin, by contrast is best known as a flashy singer of estrada, a genre of light pop music, popularized in the Soviet-era and still prevalent among middle-aged singers in Kazakhstan.

While it would perhaps be natural to assume that the Russian persona is a false one, Abdulin seems much more himself in the video “Vesnya.” His vocal style, language, and performance stance are much more characteristic in this video, and the song is effective as a result. The Kazakh-language video, on the other hand, falls flat, and does not mesh musically with the thematic and visual content. The relative success of the Russian video brings out the complex nature of cosmopolitan Kazakhstani culture. While nationalist sentiment is often expressed in Kazakh language and legend, many Russian-speaking Kazakhs like Abdulin seem to feel more at home in a more culturally Russian mode of expression.

A Nauryz concert performed by students at ZhnPI, the Women’s Pedagogical Institute reveals a similar friction. Unlike the Nauryz event at KazNU (Kazakhstan National University)—a large and highly organized event, with dances of hundreds in Kazakh dress, Kazakh warriors, and a huge finale in a sea of turquoise and yellow costumes, the colors of the

Kazakhstani flag—the ZhnPI event presented a more mixed message. While the ZhnPI celebration featured several folk music performances, it also included other dramatic presentations that speak to the rub between globalist ideology, cosmopolitan sensibility, and alternative reflections of nationalism. One skit portrayed a comical look at Kazakh engagement and marriage. Another act featured a dance number in which the performers wore cowboy hats and danced on gym steps (used for step aerobics). The three primary dancers, all women, dressed in blue jeans, denim skirts and flannel shirts, combined a country two-step with moves from step aerobics to the tune of John Martin Sommers’ “Thank God I’m a Country Boy” as recorded by Hampton the Hamster. The tempo was much faster than John Denver’s original, so the voices sounded like chipmunks, and the beat like pumping dance music. The background dancers, also women, were dressed in jeans and white T-shirts and waved cheerleaders’ pompoms. Around their necks were light blue kerchiefs, the color of the Kazakhstani flag. These kerchiefs, normally worn by school children for special events, are the Kazakhstani version of the red ties worn by the Soviet-era *pionery* (“Pioneers,” the children’s branch of the Communist Party). Like the Indian women interviewed above, these Kazakh dancers were quite comfortable wearing different hats. Kazakhs have often mentioned to me how they are the “cowboys of Central Asia,” and these dancers appeared quite at ease in this role, channeling Country & Western, maneuvering the steps, posing with pistols drawn like Bonnie and Clyde. In contrast to the KazNU performance, which more closely mirrored the nationalist bent of state-sponsored celebrations, the Nauryz concert at the ZhnPI represented an interesting mix of traditional, satirical, and “globalized” performances.

This chapter has looked at Nauryz as an intersection of globalist and nationalist processes. While Nauryz celebrations—like many other cultural events in Kazakhstan—reflect

the historical reconstruction of ancient Kazakh traditions, they also communicate a friction between identification with the nationalist agenda and a preference for other ways of self-identification. Satire, like that of the comic *aitys*, and the donning of other cultural mantles (Russian or American), as seen in Nurlan Abdulin's video and the cowboy/step aerobic dance number in the Women's Pedagogical video, allows for the expression of this friction. I have tried to show how nationalist sentiment and cosmopolitan esthetics and preferences are easily adopted, felt, and reflected simultaneously by the individual. While Nauryz was a rich mine for the study of a nationalist promotion of Kazakh culture, demonstrating the results of more than a decade of state efforts to secure for the Kazakh nation a clear and unbroken line with the ancient past, the widely celebrated holiday also demonstrated how youth culture and satire can rub against this nationalist agenda in ways that create both friction and a cosmopolitan brand of patriotism (the cowgirls with the Kazak colors around their necks). While this chapter has looked mostly at individual kinds of cosmopolitanism and alternate identities, the following chapter will outline institutional aspects of the friction between globalism and nationalism.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SPRING HOLIDAYS:**

#### **Transnational Networks and Diasporas**

Easter and Passover, as seen through celebrations in the Korean Agape church and the Almaty synagogue, bring in the complicated nature of transnational religious and ethnic networks at work in Kazakhstan. These and other spring holidays that I observed in Almaty demonstrate the blurring of national borders through transnational networks and diasporic, mobile populations. Paul James writes, “a theory of globalization must be first and foremost based on an understanding of different social formations . . . and must take into account phenomena from local communities to national polities.” (James 2007:24). This chapter looks at different scales of transnationalism, from small-scale travel, migration, and trade within contiguous regions, to large, multi-state networks involving powerful financing and organizational institutions acting on local institutions and communities from far-flung locations.

Many scholars of globalization and transnationalism have argued over the importance of physical space at play in globalizing processes. Malcolm Waters defines globalization as “a social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding, and in which people act accordingly” (in Goodman and James 2007:25). James refutes this by saying, “the ‘constraints of geography’ do not simply recede across all levels of interchange. The English Channel has not dried up, and the executives of all the world’s communications-connected corporations still experience jetlag as they fly to an ever-increasing number of ‘face-to-face’ meetings” (Goodman and James 2007:26). This chapter addresses two types of transnationalisms, whose very difference is brought about by contrasting geography. Like James,

I therefore see transnationalism and “globalization” as processes that not only do not erase geography, but that underscore its significance.

Following Thomas Turino and Aihwa Ong, I consider globalization as something that involves very disparate levels of power, wealth, and access, calling into question whether it can be considered truly “global.” Ong, writing about Arjun Appadurai’s groundbreaking work on what has been called “cultural globalization,” criticizes Appadurai for ignoring power differences between mobile and nonmobile populations. She contends that a great segment of the world’s population is able to access neither the mobility nor the technology that is key to his definition of globalization. She writes that an emerging global elite, interconnected in various ways, is amassing great wealth, while a large part of the world’s population is left out of this process. Access to any kind of global culture or forum for ideas is limited to those who are more “plugged in” in any given society. In Almaty, for example, you can indeed find teens reading *Vogue*, listening to the latest international pop star on their ipods, and watching *Madmen* on digital television. But the majority of Kazakhstanis do not have this kind of access, or only to a limited degree; this kind of “globalized access” applies largely to the elite.

My study involves two distinctly different types of transnationalism. One form is mostly disembodied, virtual, symbolic, involving the wielding of financial and ideological power over vast distances; the second is embodied, involving the physical movement of people and goods over national borders. The relationships involved are similarly contrasting: the first involves large institutions and foreign intermediaries, as is the case with the Almaty Korean church and the synagogue. The second involves close relationships of kinship and friendship networks and the relationship, whether business or family, is based on proximity and face-to-face contact. In the latter case I look at Kazakh and Uygur populations split across the Kazakhstan-Chinese

border, where the émigré population and the home state population have continued contact, and many family members in reality live in both states, traveling back and forth regularly.

When emigration entails longer distances there is often less travel back and forth, resulting in less physical and more abstract methods of exchange and communication, and more complicated diasporic networks. This is evident in the Korean and Jewish communities in Kazakhstan. The Soviet Korean population originally came to Kazakhstan under Stalin through forced migration over vast distances, with the goal of moving the internal population of ethnic Koreans (then living in the Soviet Far East) as far as possible from Korea, an “enemy nation” of the Soviet Union. While the Jewish case is more complicated, many Kazakhstani Jews were also forcibly moved under Stalin into Kazakhstan from distant cities after being labeled as intellectual dissidents dangerous to the state. In contrast to diaspora communities sharing contiguous borders (like Kazakh and Uygur populations split over the Chinese-Kazakh border), groups like Kazakhstani Jews and Koreans with ties in the more distant abroad seem to operate in larger circles of movement and power.<sup>32</sup>

### **Easter and Passover in Almaty: Transnational Networks and Imported Religious Leadership**

Both Koreans and Jews in Kazakhstan are currently involved in complicated transnational networks involving a flow of funding, leadership, and religion through triangulated diasporic routes, in which the United States is a key player. The Korean church, with an influential base of support in the United States, has begun to establish a substantial following in Almaty. The Agape church, where I observed several services, including one on Easter Day, was

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<sup>32</sup> Here I should note that my study of the Kazakh diaspora applies only to that of the near abroad—in Mongolia and northwest China—and should not be taken to reflect the larger Kazakh diaspora, which indeed spreads across Turkey, Europe, and North America, and whose dynamics are inevitably quite different than those I describe.

well attended by a mixed congregation of Kazakhs, Russians, Koreans and those of mixed ethnic heritage. Fairly typical of the “new” religions in Kazakhstan, the church was very inclusive, with many mixed marriages within the church community. The service was conducted in Korean with simultaneous translation into Russian. Of the songs accompanying worship, many were American worship songs, translated into Russian with lyrics projected onto a large screen in the front of the church. One song, entitled “He Lives” (*On Zhvoi*), featured a male soloist, standing center-stage with an electric guitar, flanked by two female dancers, and backed by a small choir in robes as well as five back-up singers with hand-held mikes, all singing in unison. The main singer played electric guitar, joined by a drumset and electric keyboard. I was struck by the dynamic nature of the performances, many of which included dance. Many clapped and moved with the music as they sang, and some singers shouted out expressions of praise like “Hallelujah!” and “He is risen!” between musical phrases and during the instrumental tags at the end of songs. My friend admitted that they strove to emulate a black gospel style of worship, and prided themselves on active, expressive participation.

The young woman who brought me to the church had known Kim, the pastor, for many years, and he was instrumental in her religious education. She was introduced to Christianity through missionaries at the orphanage where she grew up, and said that religion saved her from the fate of the streets that many of her fellow *detdomovskie* (orphanage kids) later met. At Kim’s prompting, she attended seminary in her early twenties and, ten years later, she maintained deep religious convictions and a strong, almost familial attachment to him. Kim was born in Korea, emigrating in his early twenties to the United States, where he “found” religion, went through religious education, and became a pastor in Los Angeles. He came to Kazakhstan in the 1980s, when he founded the Korean Agape Church in Almaty. Though he lived for many years in



Almaty (he has now returned to Los Angeles), his main languages remained Korean and English, as he never became proficient in Russian. Kim had children and grandchildren in the U.S. and traveled back and forth frequently to visit family. The church was built with funding from the Korean-American Christian organizations, and everywhere an American presence was evident. When I reluctantly allowed my (half-Jewish) daughter to attend Sunday school on Easter, she came out with a large present wrapped in Christmas paper. The box contained all sorts of kiddie mementos from the US: colorful hair fasteners, fancy colored pencils, a flashlight engraved with the words “Jesus is the light,” peppermint drops, and of course, a Barbie doll. The church, with its connections to Korean-American Christian organizations, and its use of the Korean language, American commercial goods, and American musical culture and style of worship, reflected its pastor’s transnational migrations. In a way its cultural and linguistic makeup traced his path from Korea to the U.S. and then to Kazakhstan, and its existence depended on the personal, religious, and financial networks of which he became a part.

In contrast to the inclusivity of churches like Agape, the Jewish organizations and institutions maintained a quite conservative view on intermarriage. We learned this when we were making inquiries into a Jewish daycare. The daycare, we were informed, required the birth certificate of the child’s mother and the child’s maternal grandmother. While most reform Jewish organizations accept children of mixed marriages, this one required families to establish a Jewish maternal line going back three generations. This strict view of Jewishness strikes me as very odd in Kazakhstan, where intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews has been common for many generations, throughout the Soviet period and continuing today. These examples highlight the awkward position of the Almaty Jewish establishment, whose formal style and strict adherence to conservative rules are at odds with its mixed population.

On the eve of Passover, we traveled to the Almaty synagogue for the seder. The synagogue, located far from the city's center, was barely visible from the street. Set back in an abandoned-looking lot, the synagogue, gated and guarded, resembled a castle, its large windows showing off an enormous chandelier hanging in the two-storey worship space. The local population was very mixed, while the rabbis, brothers recently arrived from Israel, conducted a rigidly structured seder. We arrived early, and before the seder started I sat outside on one of the lacquered wooden benches, talking with a woman, Nadia, as our children played in the ramshackle playground.

Nadia spoke about the Lubavitcher rabbis and their patchy reception in the Almaty Jewish community. She herself did not quite seem to know what she felt about them, alternately complaining and speaking warmly about them. "They didn't used to let in our (non-Jewish) relatives and those who had been baptized," Nadia says, but then assured me that the synagogue subsequently became more welcoming and anyone, even Russians and Kazakhs, could come to the seder. "But they are strict, very strict, the Lubavitchers," a reference, I gathered later, to their rather didactic style of worship that discouraged active participation and enforced a strict gender divide. The construction of the new synagogue, she explained, was supported through Israeli funding (though I noticed the meeting hall was funded by a Brooklyn couple and much of the furniture was also purchased through private U.S. donations). "We could never build such a place ourselves." The synagogue was erected in 2003; previously, services were held in a makeshift synagogue on Tashkentskaia Street.

The seder was conducted in three languages, with prayers in Hebrew, explanations and instructions in Russian, and some Yiddish spoken between the two brothers. An American woman who sat with us mentioned that she recognized many of the songs from her stay in

Israel—Hebrew children’s songs and folk songs. The participants sat at long tables where there was a constant flow of food, served by Kazakhs. The main “action” of the ceremonies took place in the center of the large hall, where the rabbis conducted the service. Because most of the participants did not seem to know the songs or prayers, the rabbis were the sole actors, while the hundred or so participants merely looked on and tried to follow their instructions. The lack of active participation speaks to the distanced nature of its leadership, and the incongruence between ideology and realities on the ground, a common feature in large-scale religious networks.

### **Friction and Stickiness**

Both of the above scenarios are good examples of how transnational flows of capital and ideology involve friction and the stickiness of local interaction. In these cases, the ways in which local actors interact with imported leadership affects how the ideology “sticks” on the ground. In the Korean church, the pastor, active for many years in Kazakhstan, had ample opportunity to make real and lasting connections with his parishioners. They viewed him as a real leader and took his teaching seriously, the conveyance of which was enhanced through continued personal contact in an atmosphere of mutual respect. In the Almaty synagogue the leadership seemed to take a more top-down approach, and the distance between the leadership and the local worshippers was palpable. While the surface tangible aspects of Jewish worship were well established (a new beautiful building and all the necessities for celebrating Jewish holidays), the ideology seemed to be stuck in transit.

Both of these scenarios are grounded in historical processes. Because of the many decades of enforced atheism in the Soviet era, international religious organizations have taken to the former Soviet territories with missionary zeal. These religious organizations tend to view the

local population as ignorant of religious ideology and traditions. The didactic approach taken by the Lubavitcher leadership is thus in part a response to the belief that Jewish traditions were virtually erased during the Soviet era. Institutional attitudes thus also affect the transnational transmission of ideology. Whatever the method of transmission, the transnational flow depends on the “stickiness” of these beliefs on the ground. The real success in conveying ideology seems to depend on the establishing of a local community in which religious teaching can thrive. The integration of these flows can be naturalized and accepted as part of local processes (as they seem to have been in the Korean church), or can remain marginalized and enduringly perceived as “foreign,” as in the Jewish service I observed.

## **Purim**

Another Jewish holiday celebration I attended, Purim, contrasted significantly with the Passover seder. Purim is a spring celebration that commemorates the deliverance of the Jews within the Persian Empire from a plot to annihilate them. Traditionally a festive, jubilant celebration, Purim involves active participation by children and young people and often includes ludic aspects like dramatic sketches and the wearing of masks. The celebration I attended with my family included many skits, both historical and playful, that reflected various aspects of Jewish identity. A semi-private event, the celebration took place in the Kazakhconcert Hall in Almaty. When we arrived, my husband explained that we did not have an invitation but learned about the event through the Almaty Jewish organization, Mitzvah. The man at the door waved us in, saying smilingly, “We can recognize our own (*nashi*).”

The Purim celebration was clearly a community-organized event. Adults and children took part in the dramatic and musical performances and while the main action took place on the stage of the large hall, there was also much activity within the hall, as attendees milled about

greeting each other before and after the event. The event began with a family trio (father and son on violin with a daughter flutist) playing a Soviet Jewish song, “The Jewish Shtetl” (*Evreskoe Mestechko*), by Mikhail Shufutskinskii. The announcer then introduced the Purim pageant with these words:

The Jewish shtetl. It gave the world such wonderful composers, poets, writers—it is enough just to say one name: Sholem Aleichem! We decided that we will also present the Jewish shtetl, in which people gathered in ancient times to celebrate such wonderful holidays on just such a square [indicating the central area of the stage]. So, let’s celebrate Purim!!

Now enter our heroes, residents of the shtetl Kostrilovka. But first I want to introduce the heroes of a legendary time . . . [introduces Mordechai, Esther, and all the characters of the Purim story].

The setting of the pageant was revealing. It framed the story of ancient Persia within a parallel story of Purim celebration in the shtetl, the Jewish village, invoking simultaneously ancient Jewish history in the Persian Empire and Jewish village life in pre-Soviet and early Soviet Eastern Europe. The reference to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Jewish writer Sholem Aleichem is particularly significant, as he was one of the first modern male literary authors to write in Yiddish about shtetl life,<sup>33</sup> and his prodigious work marked the beginning of the shtetl as an acceptable literary source and subject. The frame of the shtetl provided the backdrop of a rich Jewish cultural life.

The program also included several songs in Russian, mainly romantic songs of the Soviet era. One of the characters of the Purim story sang a Soviet-era love song—a bard song, accompanied by guitar—and later in the program the cast performed a popular Soviet Jewish

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<sup>33</sup> Yiddish had previously had been considered a non-literary colloquial language, acceptable only for the writing of women; Hebrew was the preferred literary language of learned Eastern European Jews.

song “We Melt, We Melt” (*My Taem, My Taem*). Later in the program, performers sing the Soviet-era song, “Just Like That” (*Tol’ko Tak*), whose refrain is as follows:

Не кружись над головою, черный ворон,  
А кружись, шар голубой, над головой!  
Don’t let a black raven circle over your head,  
But instead let the blue sphere circle above you!

This song was written in 1984 by a well-loved Soviet/Russian bard duo, Aleksei Ivaschenko and Georgii Vasilyev. Known simply as “Ivasi,” the duo wrote many popular songs in the 1970s–1980s, which were recorded on the Soviet classic *Melodiia* label. These songs, romantic and nostalgic, seemed to take a comfortingly optimistic view of life’s trials, and their inclusion in the program constituted a potent, positive evocation of Soviet life.

Through the high energy and festive mood of the Purim celebration, distinct political messages emerged. A speech by the Almaty rabbi, occurring midway through the program, began, “Today we unite with our sacred city Jerusalem, . . . with our fellow Jews in Jerusalem. We continue our holiday with them.” This message of unity with Israel was echoed in other parts of the celebration. In the beginning of the pageant, as characters on stage danced to the sound of klezmer clarinet, a young girl proclaimed, “Glory to Israel! Such great success!” and all repeated, “Glory! Glory!”

After the rabbi’s speech, a group of belly dancers in partial veils and flowing, sheer costumes took the stage. Recorded music began with an *oud* (a Middle Eastern plucked lute) solo followed by a female vocalist singing in Hebrew. The choice of music and dance was striking, particularly following the rabbi’s call for unity with Jerusalem. The music was *muzika mizrahit*, a genre of the Jewish diaspora featuring songs in Hebrew with instrumentation, ornamented performance style and tight, nasal vocals typical of Middle Eastern Arab music. Greatly criticized for mixing Arab and Jewish musical elements when it first emerged in the late 1950s,

*muzika mizrahit* is now performed widely by Jewish musicians throughout the Middle East and in parts of North Africa, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. While earlier references to the *shtetl* seemed to privilege eastern European roots of Jewish culture, and later Soviet life, this part of the performance clearly pointed to Israel and the Middle East. As the belly dancers swirled around the edges of the stage to the sound of the *oud* and the sultry vocals, one could not miss the Israeli flag displayed directly behind them. In a mix of political and sexualized messages, this performance indexed solidarity with Israeli Jews and thus moved the focus away from Europe toward Asia—and from the nineteenth-century *shtetl* to the present.

While the pride of Jewish culture may traditionally rest in Eastern Europe, the current concern and focus of the Jewish diaspora in Kazakhstan lies with Israel. Many Jews we spoke with in Almaty bemoaned the dwindling numbers of Jews in Kazakhstan and the growing numbers of relatives and friends who have emigrated to Israel. The dance performance, the rabbi's speech stressing unity with Jews in Jerusalem, and the call of "Glory to Israel!" all underscored the fact that Israel is now a vital and dynamic aspect of Jewish life in the CIS. While other aspects of Jewish identity were present in this Purim celebration—the *shtetl*, Soviet life—it also reflected the highly politicized nature of the Jewish diaspora.

### **Kazakh and Uygur Diasporas**

In my study of diasporas, I seek to understand how different kinds of emigrations create different kinds of networks, including spatialized and embodied networks (like that of Kazakhs crossing into Xinjiang and Mongolia), and abstract and geographically distanced networks (Koreans in Kazakhstan). The triangular Kazakh diaspora in Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and Xinjiang is based on overland paths that are still in use, and these networks depend on geographical proximity and the continued and frequent physical traversing of these paths. In the

case of the Korean diaspora, by contrast, these paths have virtually been erased because of Kazakhstan's relative distance and isolation from the Soviet Far East where the Kazakhstani Korean population was originally located. I suggest that the Kazakh near diaspora represents a kind of a regional, bounded transnationalism that depends on land or limited air travel (geographic proximity), and that is fundamentally different from the larger-scale transnational networks involved in the Korean church and the synagogue.

In Xinjiang I met Kazakhs who were involved in different kinds of transnational trade and business. Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital, located in the central/eastern part of Xinjiang, is an easy day's train ride to Almaty. The overnight train to Almaty arrives in the early morning in Urumqi, and carries with it cross-border trade and related business. Many Almatyites come to Xinjiang to buy household goods at a much lower price than what is available in Almaty. I lived for a time in a small hotel in the Uygur/Kazakh section of Urumqi, a site of many such transnational business transactions. The arrival of the train from Almaty caused a flurry of activity in the hotel, as local translators, guides, and personal shoppers arrived in the lobby to meet the Kazakhstani travelers in hopes of securing short term jobs. I went on one of these shopping trips with two Kazakh women, an Almatyite looking for furniture for family members and a Xinjiang Kazakh who was assisting her. Both spoke Kazakh, but in many cases, Chinese was needed as well. One young Kazakh couple I met was attempting to make a living from such transactions. As many Almatyites do not speak Kazakh well, many such local go-betweens also served as Russian-Chinese or Russian-Kazakh interpreters to aid in the process.

In addition to the flow of goods over the Xinjiang-Kazakhstan border, there is also a movement of transplanted families from both sides. Several Xinjiang Kazakh families had one or two family members living in Almaty while the rest of the family was based in Urumqi,



Xinjiang's capital. One young woman was studying Russian and hoped to join her fiancé working at a construction job in Kazakhstan. She was planning to move to Kazakhstan permanently and was worried about finding a job as an *oralman* with little Russian ability. Movement also happens in the other direction; another acquaintance, an Almaty Kazakh, had moved to Urumqi to live with her new husband who worked in a large development company in Xinjiang. She spoke no Chinese and was completely isolated in this foreign environment. She managed to do daily shopping by seeking out Kazakh vendors at the bazaar. Another young man from Xinjiang, who spoke very good English and was outgoing and enterprising, had bought a house in Isik, in the outskirts of Almaty, and resettled his mother, father, and several siblings and their families there. I spent time with his family in Kazakhstan as well as two siblings still living in Xinjiang. His family members in Xinjiang disapproved of his pioneering ways and were angry with him for moving his family to what they saw as an unstable environment. But when I visited the family in Kazakhstan, they seemed settled and relatively comfortable, having essentially transported their life in entirety. My reason for discussing the lives of these individuals is to point out that a discussion of transnationalism is also inherently a discussion of locality. Emigration involves the crossing of national borders into the power structure of other states and into a different population dynamic, a process that often fundamentally changes an émigré's identity and way of life. So, in a way, this discussion is very much about how locality—place—is an integral part of transnational processes.

It is also about power. In the case of Kazakhs moving from Xinjiang to Kazakhstan, the returnees (*oralmandar*) are often at a distinct advantage, because they don't speak Russian. Although many are well educated and from respected families in Xinjiang, they may be forced take low-wage, low-status jobs upon immigrating to Kazakhstan. In contrast, the Kazakhstanis I

met working in Xinjiang seemed to be financially well off and in fairly prestigious positions, but their non-working family members (particularly the wives) were isolated and socially bereft.

Emigration sets up a diasporic dynamic that encourages a cross-border flow of relatives, goods, business, and corporations, as well as a less concrete flow of shared expectations, esthetics, and a revised consciousness of sophistication and style. I saw this latter aspect clearly when working with the Uygur diaspora living in Kazakhstan and China. Uygurs are Turkic Muslim people who consider Xinjiang province their homeland and who comprised a majority in Xinjiang before the influx of Han Chinese. There is also a significant Uygur population in Almaty, with an active Uygur theater and cultural center.

I attended an Uygur event, which took place at the Assembly of Nations and commemorated a young Uygur war heroine who died in WWII. One of the singers at this event was a middle-aged woman with five sons who sings at weddings and other events. She does not consider herself a professional, but is well known in the Uygur community for her strong and beautiful voice. The song she sang at that event is called “The Seven Siblings,” and is about a family in which six of the children left Xinjiang for Kazakhstan with their mother. It is written from the perspective of the one sibling who stayed behind, and describes his grief at being absent from his mother’s funeral. The event was very Xinjiang-dominated, and this song just one of the many narratives about Xinjiang as the original homeland for Almaty Uygurs. The event stressed their experience separate from that of the Soviet Union, and in a way defined them as outsiders with a “real” homeland across the border.

I later spent more time with the Uygur singer, Meryam, and recorded some of her songs and had dinner at her house. It brought home to me that these public events are just a slice of the pie, a presentation appropriate to the moment, and that the participants are showing just one side

of their identity. As we sat at Meryam's dining table, she sang some of the songs in her repertoire, including "The Seven Siblings." Another song, probably from the 1950s, she described as "*shutochnaia*" (humorous) and is about city life in Kazakhstan. It tells the story of a young man who takes a girl out to a restaurant. He has 30 rubles, considered a lot of money for that time, and he orders "Russian salad, Kazakh meatballs, Dungan noodles, White Sea cigarettes, and a bottle of vodka." He ends up not having enough money and the waitress tells him he has to leave his suit there instead. His girl stands up to leave, saying "*Do Svidaniia! Hosh!*" (Goodbye [Russian]! See ya! [Uygur]). Unlike the poignant lyrics in the "The Seven Siblings," which reflect a longing for the Uygur homeland in Xinjiang, this humorous song describes a cosmopolitan life in Kazakhstan, where Russians, Kazakhs, Dungans and other nationalities share cities, cuisines—in short, lifeways. Meryam's life clearly includes both of these elements: she left Xinjiang when she was a young girl in the 1950s and lives in Almaty, where one can hardly escape the sort of cosmopolitan mixing described in her second song. At the same time, she still has ties in Xinjiang and recently went back for the memorial service of a close relative. An experienced performer, she is able to gauge which part of the diaspora divide to emphasize in different venues.

When I asked Meryam whether there was a difference between Uygurs in Kazakhstan and in Xinjiang, she said that Uygurs here are more "cultured." Though Meryam felt the music was "the same" in Kazakhstan and Xinjiang, her son (who is in his twenties) made more pointed observations about Xinjiang Uygurs. He showed me a video of a popular Xinjiang singer and expressed surprise to see this kind of video coming out of Xinjiang. It was shot in a makeshift dance club and spliced together cuts of singer and dancers in quick succession. While noting the video's crude technology, this young man admired its sincere attempt at hipness. He explained

that unlike Kazakhstani Uygurs, who produce sophisticated popular music videos (and have even been accused of dominating the popular music scene in Almaty), most of the Xinjiang videos are of the “folksong” type, featuring singers in traditional dress, performing at a *meshrab* (Uygur family celebration, often outside with live traditional music). Interestingly, he also admired the musical ability of the *meshrab* video musicians.

Jane Sugarman, in her work on the recording industry in Albania and the Albanian diaspora in Europe and North America, describes a similar dynamic. She writes that Albanian emigrants respond in complicated ways to representations of the homeland as rural and backward. While Albanians living in Europe and North America may poke fun at the homeland’s lack of sophistication and style, they also relate to the rural settings and traditional values with nostalgia for home. She describes spoofs of homeland music in comedy shows, much like the *aitys* satire discussed in the previous chapter. She describes “rurban” emigrants, who may have adapted to urban life in foreign cities, but who are themselves from rural areas in Albania.

By laughing at the foibles of village families, newly urban viewers may affirm the degree to which they have distanced themselves from a way of life that is both devalued by the cultural elite of their own homeland . . . and by the population among whom they are now living. (Sugarman 2004:30)

Meryam, caught between nostalgia for home and adaptation to life in cosmopolitan Almaty, occupies a position similar to that of “rurban” Albanian emigrants. Too, Meryam’s son’s comments about style and technology seem to reflect ambivalence, as he spoke of Xinjiang Uygur musicians with a mixture of respect and humor.

The diasporic aspects of style and technology are similar among Kazakhs and Uygurs in Almaty. Both communities in Kazakhstan look somewhat smugly at their less “sophisticated” co-ethnics across the border. The Almaty music scene is much more commercialized than that of Urumqi, the recordings and videos generally more polished and of higher quality. In addition, as

reflected in the *aitys* skit I describe in the previous chapter, the Kazakhstani populations, both Kazakh, and Uyghur are considered more cosmopolitan and less traditional than their co-ethnics in Xinjiang and Mongolia. The difference, however, is that in the Kazakh case, the position of homeland and diaspora is reversed. Kazakhstan, the “homeland,” is not a stylistically backward repository of tradition, but rather the bastion of cosmopolitanism and progress, while the diaspora populations in the near abroad, particularly that of Mongolia, are considered more traditional than the homeland. Local scholars of Kazakh music have even undertaken expeditions to Mongolia to seek pockets of Kazakh music that are more “well preserved” than those in Kazakhstan. While the situation with Kazakhs in Turkey, Europe, and North America is different, the Kazakh diaspora in the near abroad constitutes a dynamic precisely opposite to that which Sugarman describes. Further, the dialogue between diaspora and homeland continues to constitute aspects of style, tradition, and concepts of nationhood. Despite the state’s efforts to integrate *oralmandar* into Kazakhstani life, the complicated relations between diaspora and homeland Kazakhs, their difficulties with language and employment in Kazakhstan, and continued attachment (physically and psychologically) to the diaspora regions of their birth refute the concept of unbroken Kazakh nationhood.

## **Conclusion**

While the previous chapter examines the “friction” between globalist and nationalist perspectives on a personal level, this chapter has considered friction on an institutional level, particularly how institutional transnationalism articulates with individual experience and identity. I have shown how transnational networks affect religious teaching and organization, thereby acting upon individual and community identity, and how in the diasporic populations that cross

into the near abroad, a smaller-scale—but no less potent—flow of ideology and consciousness accompanies the transnational movement of people and goods.

I posit that there is an important power dynamic inherent in transnational networks and emigration. Imported religious leadership backed by powerful political and economic entities exerts considerable influence over the local religious communities, while the seat of power is located far from these communities. It is precisely this long-range exertion of power that is the danger of globalization. Like colonial powers, whose state leaders and company heads benefitted from tea plantations and sugar cane fields located on foreign soil, here too—in the religious proselytizing and teaching that is taking place in synagogues and churches in Almaty—the action is occurring at long distance from the point of origin, from the source of funding and ideology. Whenever the source and the action are so distanced, with a pronounced difference in the access to power and mobility on the part of the actors (the leaders vs. the congregations), there is danger of mismanagement, misunderstanding, and manipulation.

In diasporic relations, power dynamics involve the state, transnational corporations, and individual actors. Emigration can involve a loss of power and status, in adversely affecting an individual's access to jobs and community, particularly when the language dynamics are not favorable. Isolation and disillusionment with the Kazakh homeland has been mentioned in *oralman* accounts of their relocation to Kazakhstan. Attachment to one's place of birth can prove more powerful than the pull of the nation, a factor that flies in the face of nationalist propaganda. Aihwa Ong discusses how diaspora, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism have been linked in Western scholarship. She describes how transnational migrants are the new subaltern and are seen as heroically challenging state authority, and ultimately undermining the power of the nation-state. But, she posits, we also need to think about how these mobile populations work

with and within this system that ultimately still maintains a great amount of power over populations, both mobile and residential (Ong 1999). Like Ong, I find that while the concept of the nation may be challenged by the pull of other identities, the nation-state is still very much a factor in transnational lives.

The current administration's policies toward transnationalism are guided by economic factors. Unlike the isolationist policies of the Soviet era, during which there was tight control of co-ethnic ties across borders, the current regime does not discourage this kind of ethnically-based commercial activity. Like China, Kazakhstan's primary focus seems to be economic growth. In sharp contrast to the Soviet policy of isolating minority groups from their home-states, the Kazakhstani government allows the flourishing of transnational ethnic networks (like the Jewish and Korean networks) because they encourage trade and foreign investment. This speaks to the tension between the state's twin pulls of globalization and nation-building. A recent speech given by President Nazarbaev asserts his vision of Kazakhstan as a key player in transnationalism in the region. He states,

Our geographic position is at the crossroads in the Eurasian region. The process of globalization of world economic and political processes elevates this factor as a key one. Our ancestors as a part of a united family of Turkic peoples [*narody*] used this important strategic factor to their advantage: along the legendary Silk Road a wide trading corridor between European and Asiatic countries was organized. Today we are beginning to restore it in cooperation with other countries of our region and with the support of the world community. Of course in the future the trading system, financial currents and migrations of peoples between Europe and Asia will grow.

For this very reason, to say nothing about the many politically stabilizing factors, I issued forth and will develop the idea of Eurasianism [*evraziistvo*], which has, I am convinced, a strategic future. (Nazarbaev in Schatz 2004:76)

Nazarbaev clearly sees Kazakhstan as a commercial center for the region, and promotes transnationalism and Eurasianism as a way for Kazakhstan to reassert economic primacy. He

promotes Eurasianism and transnationalism as forward-looking ideologies, while locating their roots in Central Asia's past. In linking the Silk Road, Eurasianism, and current transnationalism, President Nazarbaev asserts that Kazakhstan's centralized position between Europe and Asia is both historically and currently significant. The comparison of Silk Road trade with Kazakhstan's current pursuit of globalization achieves something that Eviatar Zerubavel has described as "historical rhyming." While history may not repeat itself, it "rhymes," and the linking of past phenomena (particularly a historically crucial one like that of the Silk Road, an important conveyance for the world's religions, languages, and cultural formations), with current processes helps to naturalize and support the latter. In revealing similarities between the Silk Road and current Eurasianist transnationalist policies, the current administration supports its own initiative by giving it an undeniable appeal and the ring of success. Further, Eurasianism thus presented, as a regionally-specific transnational movement with historical roots—forward-looking but grounded in both place and time—takes on increased acceptability from both a globalist and nationalist standpoint. It allows globalism and nationalism to hang together more naturally, making Eurasianism a kind of "globalism with a national face." Thus the play of transnationalism and nationalism that I have discussed in the last two chapters are reconciled politically and economically by the state ideology of Eurasianism.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **MAY 9: THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY DAY**

The Second World War redrew borders, shifted state ideologies, and caused massive population movements and devastation across the Eurasian landmass. Throughout the CIS, the unprecedented impact of World War II became engrained in national memory, and its commemoration on May 9 is an annual event of great national and regional significance. May 9, 1945 marked the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II. Its 60th anniversary in 2005 was widely celebrated throughout the CIS and forced a revisiting of the Soviet legacy and the reprocessing of shared history. Portrayals of the war—in song, film, and school plays—tell of lost youth, sacrifice, and the suffering of the war generation in the Soviet Union. These portrayals, as well as personal accounts of the war, blend nostalgia for the war era and identification with the Soviet Union. Further, this nostalgia takes on a specifically Russian coloring, particularly in the ubiquitous Soviet Russian war songs played in public spaces and on television during the holiday. The primacy of Soviet Russia in the war story sits uneasily with local Kazakh and Jewish accounts, stirring up conflicting loyalties, particularly for veterans. Indeed, because May 9 commemorates events in a country that no longer exists, the disjuncture between present celebrations and past events are particularly striking: How are memories of the Soviet Union reconciled with celebrations in Kazakhstan and to which country should feelings of patriotism be ascribed? The Soviet legacy, so potent in commemorations of WWII, resonates through multiple generations. The widespread and deeply engrained nature of this legacy ensures its continued relevance in everyday Kazakhstani life.

In discussing articulations between memory and history, Paul Ricoeur examines how testimony is framed by historians and how a multiplicity of memories are smoothed into one

collective (even national) narrative. He writes, “It is primarily in narrative that memories in the plural and memories in the singular are articulated, and differentiation joined to continuity” (Ricoeur 2004:97). I posit that in the May 9 celebrations, certain narratives have come to constitute a canon of war memories, and appear with little variation in concerts, music videos, and school performances. Further, Ricoeur theorizes that historiography has several stages in the path from testimony to history book. He writes, “Does there not exist an intermediate level of reference between the living memory of individual persons and the public memory of the communities to which we belong?” (Ricoeur 2004:131). His answer is that people tend to relate memories to others who are close to them—and it is these exchanges between acquaintances and close relations that form the intermediate step between individual and collective memory. I suggest that a similar intermediary step is present in the context of May 9 celebrations, when veterans retell their stories to small groups and in school classrooms, thereby establishing for the listeners a physical connection to historical events. In the events I discuss, the involvement of war veterans—whether as audience members, presenters, or television interviewees—lends to the narrative an added immediacy, helping to establish these memories as collective, a key step in the historiographical process of creating national memory.

In examining the connections between memory and legacy, I build upon Ricoeur’s discussion of *chronosophy*. Outlining different ways of understanding and mapping time, Ricoeur writes that *chronosophy* has to do with “assigning significance to facts”—the assigning of periods and epochs, the understanding of time as linear or cyclical—thereby “construct[ing] the temporal ‘architecture’ of ‘our civilization’” (Ricoeur 2004:156). I argue that *chronosophy*, the assigning of large-scale meaning to time, is at work in both the Soviet accounts of WWII and in the post-Soviet Kazakhstani narratives of this period. These clashing *chronosophies* render the

establishing of integrative narratives that much more difficult, and is one of the sources of tension and difference in accounts and reenactments of the war.

In the plethora of Russian and Kazakhstani films, television shows, and concerts devoted to the subject of World War II, the pan-Soviet experience is well represented, as are “universal” subjects of gender, romance, and youth. In contrast, darker themes such as the Holocaust, the questionable morality of war, and issues of historical belonging and excision are downplayed. Finally, in addition to underscoring the Soviet sociocultural legacy, May 9 commemorations—in particular the gala event on Red Square—also reflect the Soviet *political* legacy in Eurasia and articulate Russia’s continued political and ideological dominance in the area.

### **Acting Out the War: *Inscenarovki* on Stage and in Children’s Games**

It is impossible to miss how life-shaping World War II was in this part of the world, and how prevalent its references remain in everyday life. Friends who were children in the 1970s and 1980s in Soviet Kazakhstan and Russia remembered playing intricate war games and reenacting scenes of life on the front in May 9 school plays and concerts. War films and *inscenarovki* (инсценаровки)—skits performed at school—provided children with a plethora of images and information about wartime life, which they integrated into their playtime. Children from this generation learned a great number of songs for May 9 concerts and many adults with whom I consulted could still sing a whole repertoire of war songs. These *inscenarovki* and war games represent narratives of the war, and as such hold an intermediary place between memory (testimony) and history.

On May 9 during the Soviet era, schools invited veterans to attend children’s performances, where they were seated in the front rows in places of honor reserved for them. The veterans’ presence was an essential part of these reenactments; the children were essentially

performing for the veterans, and were conscious of trying to present a realistic portrayal of the war. One acquaintance described such school performances, which took place from 1984 to 1986, when she was ten to twelve years old. The performances were quite elaborate, and took place after months of preparation. The children were divided into performance groups: the choir sang on bleachers set back from the main action of the stage; others performed dances onstage; yet another group acted out skits downstage. All were dressed in soldiers' uniforms sewn specially for May 9. Some *inscenarovki* were performed to accompany songs and dramatize the lyrics; others took place between musical numbers.

The performances often began with the song “*Sviaschennaia Voina*” (Sacred War), which was written on the eve of the declaration of war by Vasilii Lebedev-Kumach, with music by Aleksandr Aleskandrov, the composer of the Soviet national anthem. This song, which became known as the “Anthem of the Defense of the Fatherland,” was published on June 24, 1941 in the Soviet newspapers *Izvestiia* and *Krasnaia Zvezda*, and performed two days later in the Belorussia Train Station in Moscow, one of the major stations for troops deploying to the front. Opening with the words “Stand up, vast country!” it symbolized the beginning of World War II for the Soviet Union. For this reason, my informant explained, it also often opened their school productions, which proceeded in a roughly chronological fashion, outlining the history of the war. In the beginning of the production, the actors were seated on the stage, dressed as soldiers, nurses, and mothers of soldiers. The performers all stood as they began “Sacred War,” as if following the directive of the first verse, “Stand up, vast country, Stand up! To deadly battle, with the Fascists’ dark strength, with the accursed horde.” Children dressed as nurses and soldiers were signed up for the war effort, and as the song ended, the new recruits bid tearful farewells and marched off to the front. The veterans cried, my informant said, “as if it were

really happening all over again.” This particular rendering of the “Sacred War” seemed to be a fairly set template, reappearing in several concerts I observed, and in the May 9 gala in Moscow as well.

Following “Sacred War,” several songs and song excerpts portrayed the experience of life on the front. To the rear of the stage hung a screen onto which scenes from war movies were projected to augment the realism of the scenes on stage. One *inscenarovka* accompanied the song “Ballad of a Soldier” (*Ballada o Soldate*).

“Ballad of a Soldier”

(Music by V. Solov’ev-Sedoi; words by M. Matusovskii)

Through the field, along the steep banks,  
Past the huts  
In a gray military overcoat  
Walked the soldier.  
Walked the soldier, not knowing  
obstacles  
Walked the soldier, losing his friends,  
Often, it happened that,  
He walked without rest.  
Forward walked the soldier.

He walked through thunderous nights  
In the rain and hail.  
Songs with his friends from the front  
Sang the soldier.  
Sang the soldier, swallowing his tears,  
Sang the soldier, about Russian birches,  
About hazel eyes,  
About his father’s house,  
He sang on the road.

Carrying on his shoulder  
A machine gun.  
Everywhere the soldier killed  
His sworn enemies.  
Killed them near Smolensk,  
Killed them in their homestead.  
Not counting the bullets,  
Not blinking an eye,  
The soldier killed his enemies.

Through the field, along the steep banks,  
Past the huts  
In a gray military overcoat  
Walked the soldier.  
Walked the soldier, servant of the  
Fatherland,  
Walked the soldier, in the name of life,  
Saving the earth,  
Defending peace,  
Forward walked the soldier.

The *inscenarovka* accompanying the song “Ballad of a Soldier” included several media simultaneously. As the children’s choir sang the song, the actors onstage continued to portray everyday life on the front, while on the screen behind them was projected a black and white video clip of a soldier walking alone across a field. The lyrics and images overlay scenes of

solitude—the lone figure on the movie screen—with the violent, chaotic depictions in the lyrics, while the onstage action portrayed troops singing and eating around a campfire. There is a kind of duality to these portrayals that speaks to the essence of war: the violence of the battlefield projected against the nostalgia for home and homeland. The performance captured these various facets of the war through multiple media.

Another *inscenarovka* accompanied an excerpt of the song “*V Zemlianke*” (In the Dugout).

“In the Dugout”  
(Music Konstantin Listov; words Aleksei Surkov)

A fire struggles in the cramped campstove  
On the logs, sap flows like tears.  
And in the dugout the accordion sings to me  
Of your smile and your eyes . . .

Of you, whisper the birds  
In the snow-white fields outside Moscow.  
I wish you could hear  
How lonely my voice is.

You are now so far, so far away,  
Between us snow, and snow...  
To get to you is not easy  
But to death, only a few steps.

Sing accordion, to spite the winter storm  
Call forth my fickle fortune!  
My cold dugout becomes warm  
From this love that cannot be extinguished.

As the choir sang this song, the action on the stage brought the scene to life and elaborated on its story. Onstage, soldiers were seen sitting around a campfire as nurses treated the wounded and wrapped their heads and limbs in bandages. The song and actions portrayed key tropes of life on the front—the dugout, the cold, the campfire, the accordion, the nearness of death, and the longing for home. Other song excerpts accompanied onstage battle scenes,

complete with guns, explosions, and blood. In another skit, a mail carrier ran up with a letter, shouting “Mail!” He then read off names as he distributed letters to the soldiers. At one point he called out a name, “Petrov!” Only silence followed. Again, “Petrov!”—No answer. In response, the soldiers and the mail carrier all took off their hats and observed a moment of silence for the missing soldier. “The veterans always cried at this point,” my informant said, “because they remembered this happening.” In listening to my friend’s description of the *inscenarovki* I was struck by two things: first, the effort to portray the war scenes realistically; and second, the effort to prompt the veterans’ actual memories of the war. In this sense, the veterans and their own memories of the war played an active—and interactive—part in the performance event.

The performance ended with a final skit, set in 1945 Berlin, in which a radio announcement proclaimed that Soviet troops had gained control of the city. At this point a telegraph operator ran onstage and shouted to the troops gathered there, “Tovarishchi, Pobeda! POBEDA!!” (Comrades, Victory! VICTORY!!). This crucial point in the story, the moment of victory, was always followed by Russian folk dances. The children’s dance troupe, having practiced these dances for months, would take the stage and perform Russian folk dances to Russian folk classics such as “*Kalinka*” and “*Katiusha*.” At the end of the performance, the actors would give bouquets of flowers to all the veterans.

When I asked who wrote their skits, my informant said there were several teachers involved: a Kazakh musicologist, another woman who played the *garmoshka* (small Russian button accordion), and a third, elderly woman who was a dance teacher at their school—it was she who directed and wrote most of the productions. This woman, it turned out, had been at the front herself, traveling in a song and dance troupe that performed for the soldiers. “She was there, in the war, and that’s why our *inscenarovki* were so real. We didn’t laugh or anything. It

was so real, we drew blood, and we were so serious, everyone cried.” For a school play, these productions struck me as quite elaborate, using a combination of song, costumes, live action, and film to paint a realistic picture of the war. The aim seemed to be two-fold: to show sympathy for the veterans who had suffered through the tragedies they were portraying and to teach the younger generations about the war. The success of the productions in evoking emotions and realistically portraying the war was attributed to fact that the elderly director had witnessed the soldiers’ life on the front first-hand. Such mediated representations constitute that key intermediary step between testimony and memory, in which the war narrative is collectively experienced and related.

Interestingly, these war reenactments, first learned in school, were then reprocessed in the context of playtime. “Later,” my informant related, “we did [*inscenarovki*] by ourselves, outside of school, because we knew how to do them. In the fifth grade, at summer camp—of course we did them more simply because we didn’t have films.” In these skits, she explained, she and her classmates would enact scenarios similar to those that they had performed in their school productions. In this way the war sketches left the stage—and the context of the May 9 holiday—and became incorporated into play. The children, having learned the main narratives and tropes of the war, began to replicate them themselves.

My friends and acquaintances who described playing war games as children recounted taking on the roles of Germans and Russians (and also Reds and Whites—“there were two wars we used to play”). Costumed in borrowed old leather jackets, paper armbands, and caps emblazoned with swastikas and red stars, the children played war in a large grove of trees at my informant’s summer camp. She always wanted to be on the side of the Germans. That way, she said, laughingly, if we caught a Russian we could beat him, saying, “You’re a Russian, you are



supposed to bear it! The Russians in the war had to bear all kinds of things!” These impromptu *inscenarovki* and war games were a way of incorporating the themes of war into imaginative play. My informant repeatedly emphasized the attempt at realism, showing what the war was *really* like. At the end of the interview, my informant said, “Put this in there: And if I had fought, I would have been Manshuk,” a female Kazakh machine gunner who had died in combat at age twenty.

My husband, who grew up in Leningrad in the 1970s, described similar depictions of May 9. Every year a veteran would visit his school and tell stories about the war. In my husband’s memory, these were mostly historical events, like the Leningrad blockade and the battle of Moscow, Stalingrad as the turning of the tide, the battle of Kursk (a tank battle that the Soviets won), and the liberation of east Europe. “One time our teacher was crying when he was telling about the ‘*Goroda Geroi*’ [Hero-Cities],” commemorations of specific cities, like Leningrad, which had played a special role in the war. “[The veteran] told about how people [of these Hero-Cities] would play a special role in resisting the Nazi occupation, and how lots of people were killed or starved to death, and how they would fight to the last man rather than have the Nazis occupy them.” This transmittal of first-hand war experience, the testimony of someone the children knew, gave them a sense of closeness to the war. In this way the memories of the veteran passed through this small group interaction into collective, shared memories, as the tropes and narratives of the war became a vivid part of children’s understanding of this period.

### **The War in Song**

Soviet Russian war songs are played throughout the long May 9 holiday, broadcast on television, their lyrics printed in newspapers. One war memorial in Almaty plays their recordings round the clock, all year long. These songs, many of them written during the war, are a potent

marker of the war, outlining its shape and preserving its memories. I saw several Russian and Kazakhstani concerts, as well as a few recent music videos featuring these Soviet war songs, all broadcast on Kazakhstani television as the May 9 holiday approached. The canon of war songs in the concerts tended to be fairly fixed and, like the *inscenarovki*, helped to transmit central tropes of the war, though often in stylistically contrasting portrayals. A Russian concert in the Musical Theater of Svetlana Vezrodnaya in Moscow was a relatively small production. Songs performed by Russian *estrada* and pop stars, accompanied by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, were combined with simply choreographed dances elaborating the song lyrics, much like the *inscenarovki* performed in schools. A second concert, also broadcast from Russia, was a more elaborate affair, with collages of war images moving across several screens, and several popular rock bands incorporated into the usual lineup of *estrada* singers. A local Kazakhstani concert, performed in the Republican Palace in Almaty and broadcast on *Tang*, a mostly Kazakh-language channel, also featured many of the same Soviet staples.

Many war songs portray gendered experiences of the war. Marches like “Sacred War” describe the violence of the battlefield and reflect a mostly male perspective, while others reflect the perspective of women whose sons, husbands, and lovers have enlisted. While the former deal with the violence, suffering, and heroism of the battlefield, the latter are dominated by themes of waiting and grief. As such, they outline an emotional chronology of the war—sadness and romance upon parting with sweethearts at the outbreak of war; anxiety of waiting for news of loved ones (sons, husbands, lovers) at the front; and finally the grief of mourning those who do not return home at the war’s end. Three popular war songs, “My Dear One, If there had not been War,” “The Nurse’s Waltz,” and “The Little Blue Kerchief,” are characteristic of romantic war songs. Heavy with nostalgia, they reflect lost love, lost youth, the nearness of the past, and the

passing of time as central themes. Like many wartime songs of this era, “The Nurse’s Waltz” and “The Little Blue Kerchief” are waltzes, meant for dancing. Reminiscent of a time when social dancing (couples dancing) was the norm, they recall school dances, dances of youth.

“The Nurse’s Waltz” was performed in both of the Russian concerts I observed. In the latter rendition, portraits of young soldiers were projected onto a screen above the stage. The song tells the story of young students who were sent to the front upon graduation and places the school dance in the context of the war.

“The Nurse’s Waltz” (*Val’s Medsestry*)

We also had a light school waltz  
This is how it went:  
I remember as if it were today, our tenth (graduating) class  
Was enveloped in a snowstorm on the front.

The frontline medical unit on a wooded road  
Was smoked out and beaten by loneliness.  
But the soldier, lying without legs, said:  
“We will dance together, nurse, once again.”

And the nurse, white as chalk, sang the waltz,  
With a trembling voice, and began to sway unsteadily.  
Smiling at everyone: “This is for you,”  
And a tear rolled down into her smile.

So many years have gone by, but I can’t forget  
That melody sung with such pain.  
So many years have gone by, but I can’t forget  
The soldier’s courage and resolve (will).

The line “We also had a light school waltz,” highlights the extreme youth of the soldiers. Young men, taken directly after graduation from the tenth grade of high school, the graduating class, found themselves suddenly on the battlefield. This first line also refers to another Soviet song, “The School Waltz”—a reference that underscores the contrast between the two songs. While “The Nurse’s Waltz” portrays the horrific anomaly of wartime, when schoolboys turn into

soldiers, the “The School Waltz” is a Soviet children’s song that brims with optimism and waxes nostalgic about school days.

“The School Waltz” (*Shkol’ny Val’s*)

When we go from the schoolyard  
To the sound of the ageless waltz,  
The teacher will see us to the corner  
And again and again in the morning:  
Meet, study and grow  
When we go from the schoolyard.

For us the school door was always open,  
We didn’t hurry to leave.  
But how could we forget the ringing of the school bell,  
And the little girl carrying her school briefcase.

“The School Waltz” describes the “ageless waltz” and the ringing of the school bell to bring back the sounds of the schoolyard, as a marker of school days and happy memories of childhood. “The Nurse’s Waltz” inserts this reference into a description of the horrors of war to show how things *should* be, and how the war disrupted childhood. “We also had a light school waltz. This is how it went... our tenth grade was enveloped in a snowstorm on the front.” In the Soviet school system, the tenth grade was the graduating class. During the war, the tenth-grade boys were enlisted directly after graduation, while girls were signed on as military nurses. In this context, the “school waltz” refers to the graduation waltz, after which they would say goodbye to their sweethearts and family and be sent to serve in the war. The school waltz thus takes on an ominous significance: impending enlistment. The tenth grade represents a rift between the normalcy of school years, and the life that awaits them on the front.

The “Nurse’s Waltz” portrays the war as a sort of fractured world, where things are out of place—“our tenth class” on the front, a man without legs promising to dance. “My Dear One” takes a similar, if less graphic approach to war, describing the narrator’s life as an anomaly, a life that should have gone another way, “if there had not been war.” It is almost as if *she* is out of

place in her own life, and belongs in another one, where her lover is still alive. Written by Igor' Shaferan, with music by Mark Minkov, "My Dear One" was performed in a music video by Dariga Nazarbaeva, President Nazarbaev's daughter. An amateur musician, Nazarbaeva's obvious political importance heightens the impact, importance, and reach of the video.

"My Dear One, if there had not been War" (*Moi mily, esli b ne byla voyny*)

Before we met, we had to part.  
And I still have dreams about you.  
But have we really lived without each other,  
My dear one, if only there had not been war,  
My dear one, if only there had not been war.

Probably I have become old before my time  
But know that it is not your fault.  
What a handsome pair we made,  
My dear one, if only there had not been war,  
My dear one, if only there had not been war.

And again you reach out your arms,  
You call from the other side, from which there is no returning.  
Our grandchildren would already be going to school.  
My dear one, if only there had not been war,  
My dear one, if only there had not been war.

No one troubles the garden gate with a knock,  
And I am suffocating from this silence.  
You would be older now, and I would be younger,  
My dear one, if only there had not been war,  
My dear one, if only there had not been war.

The beginning of the video has a surreal quality—its images nostalgic, its characters ghostlike—as it reflects fleeting moments of the past. As it begins, young couples dance in each other's arms in an open, empty room. The light is ethereal, and the couples, unspeaking, appear as if suspended in time. The music, too, is ethereal. Nazarbaeva sings legato, with an uneven pulse, and the phrase "My Dear One" is held out, extended for several extra beats until the rapid countering phrase, "if there had not been war." As the song progresses, each couple in the video

separates, the young men move away and disappear, and the young women are left standing silently, looking off-screen in the direction of their departed sweethearts. Some of the young women, too, are in uniform. One young Kazakh woman resembles the Kazakh war heroine Manshuk. In the last verse of the song, the video shows old women, alone, one on a park bench watching children play, another entering the gate to her solitary house. The images tell the story of solitude, love lost, and the passing of time. In hindsight, the opening dance scene appears as if floating, suspended in time, a memory of the couples' youth before the war. This song, like the "Nurse's Waltz," reflects the rift that the war opened up—a rift between the present and the past, between youth and old age.

The song lyrics and video images in a way describe two lives, the one the narrator is living, and the one that exists in her memory and imagination. She imagines what life would be like if her lover were still alive—"our grandchildren would already be going to school." She mourns lost love ("have we really lived without each other") and lost youth ("probably I have become old before my time"), but more than that, there is the sense in this and other songs that the past is somehow clearer, more real than the present. The present is vague, empty, silent, whereas the past was rich with color, activity, and romance. Further, there is an interesting warping of time—"You would be older now, and I would be younger . . . if there had not been war." She has aged prematurely while her lover remains forever youthful. Youth and old age, these are the central focus of this video.

"The Little Blue Handkerchief" is a staple of May 9 celebrations. Written in 1940–1942, it has become iconic of the war years and was included in virtually every May 9 concert I observed, including several Russian and Kazakhstani concerts, a music video performed by the Kazakhstani Children's Theater *Tangsary* on channel Tang, and an informal gathering of Jewish

women commemorating Jewish war heroes. It carries the same reflection of loneliness and parting with loved ones as in “My Dear One,” but from the perspective of the soldier on the front. Several versions of this song have been published. The following version is from the songbook, *Nam Nel’zya bez Pesen’* (We Cannot Live without Songs) (Ivanov 2004).

“Little Blue Kerchief”

(Words by Yaakov Galitskii and Mikhail Maksimov; music by Ezhi Petersburskii)

Little blue kerchief  
Fell from hunched shoulders  
You said that you would never forget  
The tender and joyful meetings.  
At night  
We walked with you...  
No more nights!  
Where are you, little kerchief,  
My dear, desired, my own.

Having received your letters,  
I hear a dear voice  
And between the lines  
The blue kerchief  
Again appears before me.  
And more than once  
Have I dreamed in the predawn hours  
Of curls in the kerchief,  
The dark blue nights,  
The sparks of girlish eyes.

I think about how on a memorable evening,  
The kerchief fell from your shoulders.  
How you saw me off  
And promised  
To keep the blue kerchief.  
And let there be for me  
No beloved, dearest,  
I know that with love,  
You will hide the blue kerchief  
Behind the headboard of your bed.

How many sacred scarves  
We carry in our hearts!  
The joyful meetings,

The girlish shoulders,  
We remember on the battlefield.  
For them, our dear ones,  
Our beloved and desired ones,  
Ratatatats the machine gunner,  
For the little blue kerchief,  
That was on the shoulders of our loved ones.

While this song portrays the remembrances of a soldier serving on the front, the image of the blue kerchief has gained iconic significance somewhat apart from the song itself. In concerts and war commemorations throughout the former Soviet Union, the image of the blue kerchief—often appearing as a prop in staged skits—represents the parting of a soldier and his sweetheart during enlistment. The iconic blue handkerchief appears early in the first Moscow concert, which opens, as in the children’s skits, with the “Sacred War,” followed by a verse of “The Little Blue Kerchief.” Young soldiers in uniform enter first during the orchestral rendition of “Sacred War”; then, in the opening measures of “The Little Blue Kerchief,” young women in civilian dress enter the stage one by one, searching for their sweethearts. The couples, having found each other, stand in a still embrace. As the song ends, the young soldiers line up, their enlistment imminent, as their lovers stand off to the side waving their blue handkerchiefs. Icons like the blue handkerchief appear regularly in May 9 performances thereby becoming a part of the canon of war images that make up the master narrative of WWII.

In addition to visual markers of the war, we can also discern sonic references to the war in these performances. The waltz and the accordion appear again and again, and are a very common part of war stories and songs. A music video performed by the Kazakhstani Children’s Theater *Tangsary* on the Kazakh-language channel *Tang* featured an interesting version of “The Little Blue Handkerchief,” in which the waltz was prominent. In this video, made to look like an old black and white movie, the setting was a Soviet classroom or club of some kind. The children



in school uniforms sat at desks, looking despondent. One of the students put on a record and they began to dance as one of the children sang “The Little Blue Handkerchief.” This video echoes the nostalgic nature of many of these performances, and also underscores the important role of dances, particularly the waltz.

I observed another striking waltz in a performance by students of the Women’s Pedagogical Institute on Women’s Day. In this performance, soldiers in uniform (women dressed as men) paired off with women in Russian folk costumes and waltzed to the accompaniment of the *garmoshka*. In both of these performances there was an emphasis on romance through dance. The waltz, as a nostalgic device, represents a way to connect physically, visually, and sonically with the war era. Further, the accordion appears in practically all of the performances mentioned above and is prominently featured in other important events like the gala on Red Square. While the guitar came to be commonly used in later war songs, particularly those of the Afghanistan war, the accordion is iconic of World War II songs, particularly dances. Played as an accompaniment to both Russian folk songs and popular tunes of the war era, the button accordion is a potent sonic representation of both Russia and the war era.

### **Wartime Feminism and the Gendered Experience of War**

In the former Soviet Union, as in the United States, gender appeared as an important aspect of wartime. American feminist images like Rosie the Riveter highlighted women’s crucial contribution to the war effort, as they entered the workforce in large numbers to fill the void left by men entering the military. In the Soviet Union, women entered combat, underwent specialized training as snipers, and were heavily recruited in Kazakhstan along with their male counterparts. In both cases, the needs of wartime forced a new emphasis on feminism and women’s service to their country. While American pre- and postwar standards of femininity called for women to

work in the home as mothers and homemakers, World War II forced an ideology of feminism as a national necessity. In the Soviet Union, by contrast, socialist ideology had already laid the groundwork for wartime feminism. Soviet ideology from the outset viewed women primarily as undifferentiated members of the labor force; trained as engineers, doctors, and teachers, women were expected to contribute equally to national production and development.

Two Kazakh war heroines, Manshuk Mametova and Aliya Moldagulova, are mythologized in song and film. Both considered Almaty their home, and war memorials dedicated to them in Astana and Almaty remain important sites of May 9 commemoration ceremonies. Manshuk Mametova and Aliya Moldagulova both died in combat in WWII, Manshuk at twenty and Aliya at eighteen. The many accounts of their lives highlight their youth, gender, and ethnicity.

Aliya was the subject of a song famously performed by a young Roza Rymbaeva, the longstanding premier diva of Kazakhstani *estrada*. Now in her fifties, Roza Rymbaeva was just twenty years old when she sang “Aliya” at the 1977 USSR National Song Contest in Moscow, a performance that earned her first prize and propelled her to stardom. Part of the appeal of the performance had to do with the similarities between Aliya Moldagulova and Roza Rymbaeva herself. A very young, relatively unknown Kazakh woman, small in stature, Rymbaeva embodied the qualities that history has ascribed to the Kazakh war heroine. Her performance was nothing short of astounding. With a power that belied her size, and a vocal ability and emotional range unusual for her youth, she gave an overwhelming performance. She has since become a polished performer of the rather schmaltzy pop tunes common to *estrada*, and her popularity has led her to appear in many government functions, where her performances often function as conveyances of state policies. Now the leading lady of Kazakhstani *estrada*, married to an

important politician, she unfortunately rarely shows the kind of raw emotional power that was present in this 1977 legendary performance. But, after watching it, I immediately understood why Rymbaeva became such an important figure in the Kazakhstani musical and political scene. She in essence became a Kazakh heroine, representing Kazakhstan as a force within the Soviet Union, and reminding the audience of Kazakhstan's crucial part in the war.

The lyrics of the song "Aliya" abound with natural imagery and national pride, and simultaneously highlight the heroine's beauty and youth.

"Aliya"

(Music by Seidulla Baiterekov; lyrics by Bakir Tazhibayev)

You grew up loving the water of the Kobda, Neva,  
You grew up gathering armfuls of beautiful flowers.  
Like a swan's child  
Parting with the beautiful, breathtaking melody (*kui*) of youth.

Refrain:

Aliya, beauty of my people,  
Aliya, heroine of my people,  
Dove of my steppe.

For you we will cut a memorial of marble.  
For you, the clear sky will rejoice.  
For you, beautiful epics are composed.  
For you, Spring stretches out her arms in greeting.

-Refrain-

You are the star Venus, shining brightly,  
Standing stock still, I can't take my eyes from your beauty.  
In the breast of your native land, forever  
Stands your heart, burning with fire.

The song lyrics equate Aliya's beauty with that of the Kazakh steppe. Nature itself celebrates her: "For you the clear sky will rejoice . . . For you, Spring stretches out her arms in greeting." Aliya's youthful power, her "heart, burning with fire," becomes a part of the Kazakh homeland, remaining "in the breast of [her] native land, forever." Aliya remains in national

memory as embodying Kazakhstan's part in the Soviet victory. In her legendary performance of this song, Rymbaeva too becomes part of this history. Immediately canonized as a heroine in her own right, the young Rymbaeva thus launched her career as the diva of Kazakhstan, and set the stage for her eventual role as political mouthpiece for independent Kazakhstan. The fact that such an important cultural and political figure began her fame in the context of WWII is significant, and underscores the continued political importance of the war.

Manshuk Mametova first worked as a nurse in the Red Army in 1942. After receiving military training, she became a machine-gunner on the front, and was named the first machine gunner in her unit. The 1969 Soviet film *Pesn' o Manshuk* (*Song of Manshuk*), directed by Mazhit Begalin and produced by Kazakhfilm, follows her story from enlistment to her death on the front. The dialogue between Manshuk and her fellow soldiers reflects the socialist brand of feminism that prizes bravery, discipline, and service over femininity. The fact that Manshuk is a Kazakh woman is important to the film's message—that she as a Kazakh is equal to Russians, that she as a woman is equal to men. Doubly “other,” Manshuk conveys the twin messages of gender equality and the Friendship of the Peoples.

While the fact that Manshuk is a woman and Kazakh is key to the film's message, the character downplays these aspects of her identity throughout the film and resists her comrades' attempts to peg her as anything but a soldier. She becomes friends with a Russian lieutenant, Valerii Ershov, who tries to break through her steely exterior with jokes and flirtations. When Ershov asks her to sing him a Kazakh song, she refuses. When he asks whether she has a boyfriend, she cuts him off angrily, saying, “You should be ashamed, comrade lieutenant! What kind of joke is that, when there is so much blood all around?” Manshuk sees his joking as attempts to insert romance into the context of war, thus belittling the seriousness of battle, and

diminishing her status as a soldier. She refuses to speak about her personal life, of her family and a boy from her *aul* for whom she is searching on the front. In a way, Manshuk's ideology reflects the prototypical *homo sovieticus*. She sees herself as a functionary of the state—in this case as a soldier—and her personal attributes and life story are of secondary importance.

The Russian Soviet film *A Zori Zdes' Tikhie* (The Dawns Here are Quiet) by Stanislav Rostotskii was based on the novel of the same name by Boris Vasiliev, which takes as its subject five young women who have signed on to the war effort as sharpshooters. In this story the five women, led by a male commander, Major Fedot Vaskov, are sent to a remote border area, a wooded wilderness, to scout out the presence of German paratroopers. In the climactic scene, the small group is scattered around a rocky, wooded area, which they navigate as they exchange gunfire with a handful of Nazi soldiers. Moving between the trees, into patches of sunlight and back into the shadows, as they take lethal aim and avoid Nazi bullets, they seem almost protected by their beauty, youth, and femininity.

Throughout the film, Vaskov seems to waver between collegial and fatherly roles with regard to the five women. While he respects their skills and bravery, he also wants to protect them. In one scene, when they first spy the German paratroopers, and are about to be discovered by them, one of the women hatches a plan to buy them more time. They all shed their uniforms and masquerade as civilians, clearing a hillside. The women don colorful Russian scarves, and go to work chopping down trees, shouting and singing to draw the attention of the enemy soldiers. As the Nazis approach, one of the women strips down to her underclothes and plunges into a pool, singing and bathing, in an effort to distract the Nazis. Vaskov shouts out to them from a nearby area, joking and laughing with them. This scene is important because they seem to fall into “normal” gender roles. The women appear girlish, the Major jovial and familiar. In

contrast to their wartime roles, where they appear serious and rigorous, here the girls are decidedly feminine and playful. They seem to be drawing upon other personas, from their pre-war lives.

In each of these portrayals of women soldiers in the war, we see a similar insertion of “normal life” into the stories, which provides a contrasting image showing what the heroines are like outside of the war context. *Song of Manshuk* includes a flashback of Manshuk as a girl on the *aul* with a long braid and light cotton dress; similarly “Aliya” contains a description of the protagonist’s childhood on the steppe gathering flowers. And in the film above, we saw the female snipers acting out a woodcutting scene as a battle tactic. These scenes depict a life in which femininity is “normal.” In the war, by contrast, femininity is a frivolous luxury, a non-essential item to be shed and left behind upon departure to the front.

Socialist ideology views romance as contrary to the rigorous discipline of socialism and military conduct. In China during the Cultural Revolution, this was taken to the extreme, with young women of the Red Guard practicing breast-binding to erase the traces of their femininity. In the Soviet Union, the feminist emphasis was not on androgyny, but rather on women’s strength. The ideal woman was the powerful worker and mother, like the Soviet images of the heavily muscled collective farm workers, or the Soviet famous statue, “Rodina-Mat” (Mother-Homeland). While not androgynous in appearance, the ideal Soviet woman was focused on productivity, rather than sexuality. Reflecting this functional nature of Soviet feminism, the women soldiers in *The Dawns Here are Quiet*, the *Song of Manshuk* and “Aliya” are not primarily sexual beings, but subjects of strength and service.

## May 9 and the Kazakh Experience of WWII

Almaty is a particularly important city for the Kazakh commemoration of war, as it is home to a park dedicated to the 28 *Panfilovtsy* (*Park Imeni 28-mi Gvardetsev-Panfilovtev*) referred to hereafter as Park Panfilovtsev. The *Panfilovtsy* (plural form; *panfilovets*, s.) were heroes of Almaty's 316<sup>th</sup> rifle division who, according to Soviet accounts, nearly all perished defending Moscow. The division, under the command of General Panfilov, was charged with defending the Volokolmsk Highway, a major thoroughfare leading to Moscow from the west. Completely surrounded, the Kazakhstani division destroyed a large number of German tanks on November 14, 1941 and successfully stopped the Nazis from reaching Moscow. While the facts have been subsequently disputed, the story remains in film and Kazakhstani history that very few of the Panfilovtsy survived the battle. The Panfilovtsy have been immortalized in myth, their story known by every school child in Kazakhstan.

One of the most important representations of Kazakhstan's participation in the war, the Panfilovtsy are commemorated in film, song, and May 9 celebrations throughout Kazakhstan. A live dramatic performance in Park Panfilovtsev every May 9 in front of the "eternal flame" portrays Soviet Kazakh soldiers facing German soldiers in a miniature battle reenactment. The 1967 film *Za Nami Moskva* (Behind us, Moscow), directed by Mazhit Begalin, follows the story of the Panfilovtsy. Begalin, who also directed *Song of Manshuk*, again takes as his subject Kazakh participation in WWII. The main character, a Kazakh commander, is the hero of the story, while General Panfilov appears as a somewhat less likable character, whose error in sending the Panfilovtsy into this area was essentially their death sentence. In one scene, the Kazakh commander examines a map of the area with fellow officers. He takes out his knife, slices off half of the map, and burns it. In so doing he literally erases the road back and the

possibility of retreat. He says to his fellow officers that there is “only Moscow” for them now, and they will fight to the death defending it.

The climax of *Behind us, Moscow* is a battle scene in which the Panfilovtsy are on the edge of a wide, unprotected, snow-covered field that they have to traverse into German-held territory. They lie belly-down in the snow, knowing that many will not survive the crossing. One soldier stands up, yelling “Forward!” and is shot down. After a pause, a young Kazakh soldier stands and is also shot and killed. The leader of the division then stands, shouts, “Forward!” and all the soldiers follow him. The bloodbath that follows is haunting, as bodies fall one by one onto the white field. These scenes express the central trope of the Panfilovtsy story, which persists in current commemorations: the Panfilovtsy went into battle with the knowledge that there was no road back and they played a crucial role in defending Moscow, the heart of the Soviet Union, from the Nazis. In interviews on Kazakhstani television, small children, ages four and five, recounted the history of the Panfilovtsy. One child explained, “Our veterans defended Moscow, so the Fascists couldn’t get any further.”

A music video, “Alkissa” (Әлкисса), performed by *dombra* player Mairzhan Ermegiev (Мәііржан Ермағияев), takes a somewhat different approach to the war. Where the above films dwell on the violence of war and Kazakh sacrifice, Ermegiev’s video depicts the camaraderie among soldiers during wartime. In the video, Ermegiev plays a *dombra kui*, surrounded by his fellow soldiers, who relax as they sit around a fire and listen. Ermegiev is a virtuoso musician who favors a rollicking, *terpe*-style of playing. The fast tempo and major key render it almost joyful, a different kind of heroism, a positive view of the war.

The video emphasizes Soviet camaraderie, but also highlights appreciation for national culture. They are all Soviet soldiers, of various ethnic backgrounds, but they listen appreciatively



to the Kazakh *kui*. At the end of the video the soldier rides home in an old army truck, to a Kazakh *aul*. He is welcomed home by his old *apa* (Kazakh grandmother) in a white headdress, as other family members run to meet him. It is springtime and the soldier's family has gathered for the celebration; a *dastarkhan*, or Kazakh feast, is laid out on a long row of tables under blooming apple trees. It is a scene that stresses the large Kazakh family common during this era and the importance of family ties. Depicting both wartime camaraderie and Kazakh family life, this production seems to simultaneously celebrate Kazakh culture and Soviet "Friendship of the Peoples."

On May 9, the Kazakhstani channel Tang broadcast a lengthy interview, conducted in Kazakh, with WWII veteran Kaskabay Mukanov (Қасқабай Мұқанов). Like Ermegiev's video, this interview presented a mixture of Kazakh and Soviet identities, and portrayed the general, shared experience of these years spent as a soldier. The interview began with detailed, insightful stories about his experiences in the war:

I was sitting then, as I am now, and in one moment, someone told me that the squad commander was calling me, and I ran there. Having run there, I returned to my trench in the space of about ten to fifteen minutes. When I got there, I saw that someone was sitting in my trench. And I started to speak in Russian everything that I knew. I didn't say a word, I wanted to shoot, but all of a sudden I understood that he was dead. I saw blood, flowing from his mouth and again understood that he had just died. I saw many dead bodies, but here I either lost my sense, or felt sorry for him, and so I embraced him, fell into the trench together with his body. I sat there embracing him for a long time until I finally snapped out of it. If this trench had become a grave, then it was meant to be and should be so. Moving ahead five to six meters, I dug for myself a new trench and I constantly thought about the fact that I didn't know his name. "Who was he?" I asked myself about the one whose grave I had dug!

Mukanov's story reflects the intimacy of soldiers living and fighting together, always in the proximity of death. When Mukanov first speaks to the dead man, he speaks in Russian, having recognized him as a Russian soldier. Then, realizing that the soldier is dead, he climbs

into the trench and embraces him, wondering who he was, why he did not know his name. In a way, Mukanov, in finally seeing the dead man as a fellow soldier, not as Kazakh or Russian, embraces the Soviet ideal.

Later in the interview, the veteran is asked about his family, particularly about his Belorussian wife. He explains,

The mother of my beloved children was a Belorussian girl named Klava. Of course there is nothing better than one's own nationality. This is something that is given us by God. But in addition to this, along with this, you still remain a person, and if you meet a worthy person, even if he is another nationality, he will be not worse than someone who is the same nationality as you. It was so great, they performed songs at our house, including "Kustar" (Қыстар) and "Aksaule" (Ақсауле), the latter of which was dedicated to my Klava. My wife bore three golden suns for the Kazakh land, all three are Kazakhs, and have Kazakh souls.

Again, Mukanov speaks about the humanity and the inner qualities of a person. While nationality is important, it is more important that your partner is a "worthy" person. Notably, he stresses that, while his wife is Belorussian, his sons are Kazakh, and have "Kazakh" souls.

At the end of the interview, Mukanov describes his feelings about being a part of the Soviet army.

After Victory, I served in Germany for four years, as a great Russian officer. I am not Russian, but Asian, but before the Germans melted away, which were at one point vanquished by us. Because I was an officer of the victorious Soviet army. This was happiness. What else could I ask of God? It was our victory. Nobody ever said to me, "This victory is not yours, but the Russians'." I fought as an equal alongside Russians and Georgians. I consider it my own victory.

Mukanov's interview reveals several ways of portraying Kazakh participation in the war and reflects nested identities: Soviet, Kazakh, and personal. In speaking about his family, Mukanov stresses the importance of nationality, while in the latter portion of the interview he expresses great pride in being a part of the Soviet army. As an "officer of the Great Soviet Army," Mukanov is proud of his part in the Soviet victory, a victory, he explains, that is not

“Russian,” but his own. He thus also reiterates the importance of the personal: “I consider it my *own* victory.” His is a personal account of the war, which includes both individual experience and the shared experience of wartime. Thus while his awareness of nationality is always present, he stresses his strong association with Soviet identity, and more broadly, with the humanity that he prizes in his wife and fellow soldiers.

### **The “Good” War and the “Greatest Generation”**

An inscription in Kazakh at the beginning of the music video “Young Kazakh” reads:

*Рухыңа болашақ бас иетін,  
Ұмытылас – ерлігін, қасиетін!*  
The future will bow their heads to your soul,  
Oblivion is bravery and honor!

The verse reflects a generational aspect of WWII portrayals—specifically the heroism of the war generation and the current generation’s debt to them. Such commemorations portray the war as a time of suffering, but also as a kind of golden time, when morality, like films of that era, appeared in black and white. Interviews with participants in May 9 celebrations often include discussions of grandfathers’ participation in the war, and lessons to be learned from the generation of WWII veterans. There is a long history of performing for veterans, and doing good deeds for veterans on May 9 to show appreciation for their role in the war. One acquaintance, Zhazira, describes these services to veterans on the holiday:

When we were at school—I was twelve or thirteen—they divided us into groups, and we went to help the veteran. We would clean their houses, carry water, and take out the garbage. I was such an “activist,” I always volunteered! My grandfather fought in the French war and was injured—a head injury—so they didn’t take him in WWII. I would have to look after him because he would go out and get lost, wandering around the neighborhood.

The concept of a debt to the veterans was translated into action on May 9. Veterans were invited to children’s performances in schools and concert halls, and were looked after in their

homes, as school children helped them with everyday tasks. Zhazira recounted this special treatment of veterans on May 9 and described the daily care she provided for her own grandfather. If young adults described their own grandfathers' participation in the war in an overwhelmingly positive light, the veterans spoke of the younger generations with some ambivalence. One veteran interviewed during a demonstration of Soviet military uniforms and artillery on Feb 23 (Red Army Day, a former Soviet holiday), said, "this generation can learn something from the workings of the Soviet army." Other veterans also discussed the discipline they learned in the Soviet military, which gave them a rigor and morality that (they believed) the younger generation lacked.

Kaskabay Mukanov, in describing his war experiences and subsequent family life, was asked to compare his generation with today's youth. He answered:

It is hard to talk now about today's youth. The difficulty is because the times are hard. What is the sense of speaking badly about this time? I was invited today to my university as a war veteran. Not one Kazakh could ask me a question.

While hesitant to criticize the younger generation, the veteran was uncomfortable with the fact that the students did not try to engage with him on the subject of the war. Specifically he voiced disappointment that no *Kazakh* students participated in the discussion. For him, it was important that Kazakh youth in particular understand the part of the older generation in the war.

Many scholars have written about World War II and its portrayal in American history as a "good" war, as opposed to, for example the Vietnam War, which was so widely unpopular, and provoked so much dissent in popular culture over its questionable morality. Kazakhstani and Russian portrayals of Soviet participation in the Afghan war bear a similar comparison. While portrayals of Afghanistan, like those of WWII, highlighted the heroism of soldiers, they also reflected a fatalism and dismay at the futility of the Afghan war, and at times portrayed the

soldiers themselves (in the first person) in a negative light. Whereas Soviet action in WWII is portrayed as unambiguously glorious and heroic in the films and videos discussed above—where we see the war’s violence as suffering rather than cruelty—there is something vicious and dirty about the way Afghanistan appears in Kazakhstani videos and war songs.

“*I Vot Opiat’ Idem v Gory*” (And So, We Go into the Mountains Again) is an Afghanistani war song, which was told to me by a woman who described it as a “*dvorovaya pesnya*,” a “backyard song” sung in apartment block courtyards—essentially an urban folk song with many different versions. She learned the version below from an Afghan war veteran at her summer camp.

“And So, We Go into the Mountains Again”

And so, we go into the mountains again  
We know there is nowhere to hurry to  
The *basmachis* will not catch us soon,  
The better not to joke with us.  
The *basmachis* will not catch us soon,  
The better to live on this earth with us a little longer.

A lonely shot rings out,  
I quickly dropped behind an outcropping  
Ah, thank God, it didn’t find its mark,  
And the *dushman* [Afghan soldier] didn’t get me in his sights.  
Ah, thank God, it didn’t find its mark,  
And the *dushman* [Afghan soldier] didn’t get me in his sights.

I lie behind the outcropping and see  
They are going into the mountains.  
In their hands they have English bayonets  
and in their belts, axes.

The *basmachi* are so vicious  
You can see it in their eyes.  
And we have become just as vicious,  
There are no words to describe it.  
And we have become just as vicious,  
There are no words to describe it.

And so, we go into the mountains again  
We know there is nowhere to hurry to.  
The *basmachis* will not catch us soon,  
The better not to joke with us.  
The *basmachis* will not catch us soon,  
The better to live on this earth with us a little longer.

This song clearly departs from the heroism of the World War II songs, which reflect an unwavering sense of duty, patriotism, and heroism. Here, by contrast, the portrayal is not black and white, of heroes and villains. Rather, there is a fuzzy sense of right and wrong in these verses, a questioning of war ethics that is not present in the WWII songs: “The *basmachis* are so vicious, you can see it in their eyes. And we have become just as vicious, there are no words to describe it.”

While May 9 celebrations are primarily dedicated to veterans of the Second World War, some commemorations of Afghanistan make their way into televised programs around May 9. One Kazakhstani music video, “Song of the Border Guards,” performed by Afghanistan veterans, was broadcast on *Tang* in early May, and makes reference to the holiday.

“Song of the Border Guards” (original lyrics in Russian)

I will store away my green military cap.  
On that day in May I will clean its stars.  
I will stay out late (or go out drinking), don’t scold me, mother.  
On this holiday, I want to remember my [military] service.

It was always hard, raw.  
Let’s sing about the soul of a soldier:  
How it burned in the fire, how it drowned in a tear,  
How at night the silence suffocated us.  
How it burned in the fire, how it drowned in a tear,  
How at night the silence suffocated us.

Let’s remember, brother, Afghanistan.

Those heroic guys who stayed behind time.  
Let's remember that bitterness in the wine,  
Our life at the last border.  
Let's remember that bitterness in the wine,  
Our life at the last border.

I will store away my green military cap.  
On the day in May I will clean its stars.  
Zhavnakol' and Hasan, Tegeran and Afghan,  
Let the soil there be as featherdown to our guys.

While the author of the song is unknown, the video is specifically about Kazakhstani soldiers in Afghanistan. As it features Afghanistan vets, mostly middle-aged now, there was an interesting disconnect between the performers and the narrator, who writes from quite a youthful perspective. The soldier's appeal to his mother, "Don't scold me mother," emphasizes his youth and the generation gap they face in talking about war. Afghanistan vets are fighting to be remembered with the respect and veneration accorded WWII veterans. Those interviewed in the Panfilovtsy Park expressed discomfort with the lower status they occupy as veterans of an unpopular war, and insisted that they should be treated as well and regarded as highly as veterans of World War II. The differences between portrayals of veterans of the "Great Patriotic War" (as World War II is called in Russian) and Afghanistan war vets highlight a generational tension. While the former are prized as valuable conveyors of wisdom and morality, as can be seen by the many televised interviews with WWII veterans on television and in the classroom, the latter seem to be of a generation that fell through the cracks. Not Soviet in any admirable way, and yet also not post-Soviet, Afghan vets are rejected as unfit role models for today's Kazakhstani youth. World War II veterans want young people to understand the war experience and to accept Kazakhstan's participation in it as part of their national history, rather than relegating this testimony to Soviet history, a history that Kazakhstani youth do not claim as their own.

## **Ethnicity and Wartime Patriotism**

Many Kazakhstani and Russian commemorations of WWII reflect a complicated relationship with the “Jewish Problem,” as it is called in Soviet wartime and post-war scholarship. The portrayal of universal suffering vs. specific Jewish tragedy, a tension between Soviet and Jewish identities on the part of Soviet Jews, the excision of Jewish heroes from Soviet history and exclusion of Jewish suffering in the Soviet press and war commemorations all reflect an uneasy relationship between Soviet and Jewish histories. The establishment of the Israeli state immediately following WWII, and the subsequent allowances for Jewish emigration in the 1960s and 1970s only served to further alienate the Jewish population in the perceptions of many Soviets.

Weiner writes about twin institutions of Soviet wartime and post-war commemoration, “hierarchical heroism” and “universal suffering,” which he calls the “cornerstones of the Soviet ethnonational ethos of the war” (Weiner 2001:208). He explains,

Whereas the various nations of the Soviet Union were ranked in a pyramidlike order, based on their alleged contribution to the war effort, their suffering was undifferentiated. More so than any other ethnonational community, these aspects of the Soviet ethos were evident with regard to the Jewish community. Jewish participation in the trials of combat service were ignored in public and denied in private . . . the Holocaust was incorporated into the epic suffering of the entire Soviet population, thus ignoring its uniqueness to the Jews. (Weiner 2001:209)

In all the public events, films, and concerts I observed regarding WWII and the May 9 holiday, I was struck by the complete silence on the subject of the Holocaust in public commemorations and broadcasts. In fact, the only time I heard it mentioned was at the Almaty Jewish center, Mitzvah. Instead, concerts stressed common suffering portrayed in individual stories, while war films and television serials tended to follow the stories of whole brigades, stressing the heroism and brotherhood within the collective. When ethnicity was highlighted, it



tended to feature non-Russians fighting bravely to defend the Soviet homeland, as in the Soviet era Kazakhstani films *Za Nami Moskva* and *Pesn' o Manshuk*. In none of the many films I saw did Jewish soldiers appear fighting on the front—Kazakhs, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Georgians, but not Jews. This historical excision of the Holocaust was particularly glaring in the 2004 epic Russian film *Shtrafbat*, which was shown over several days on the Kazakhstani channel KTK and followed the story of a penal division of the Soviet military which fought at the front. At the end of the film there was a list of the numbers of war dead, listing each country in turn, ending with the Soviet Union (six million). While clearly many of these were a result of the Jewish holocaust, there was no mention of Jewish victims here, or for that matter, anywhere in the eight-hour epic.

The need to fill this historical gap in Soviet history seemed to drive the commemoration of Jewish war heroes at the Mitzvah Jewish Center in Almaty. This event was part of regular meetings at the Jewish center, a weekly gathering of elderly women. At this particular meeting, in honor of May 9, one of the members, a retired history professor, gave a presentation describing the biographies and sacrifices of several Jewish war heroes from Kazakhstan. The presentation and subsequent discussion struck an awkward balance between the themes of universal suffering and an ethnic commemoration of the war, and reflected a marked tension between Jewish and Soviet identification. The discussion included heated debates about the human cost of the war among the Soviet population, the invisibility of Jewish heroes in Soviet reports of the war, and emotional reminiscences of personal tragedies resulting from the war.

At the end of the program, the lecturer attempted to lead the group in the singing of several Soviet war songs, romantic and heroic songs like “Katiusha” and “The Little Blue Handkerchief.” While the retired professor insistently sang all the verses that she knew, some reluctantly joined in and others fidgeted and rolled their eyes. The lecturer, who had taught at the

Academy of Sciences, seemed to take a distinctively more Soviet approach to this event than most of the other members. While many of the members were willing to look at the larger Soviet picture, to talk about not only Jewish suffering but the suffering of the Soviet people, the historian's heroic singing of the Soviet war anthems was received with antipathy by many members. This particular way of commemoration—the singing of Russian-Soviet war songs—was rejected as awkward and inappropriate in the context of a Jewish memorial event, as it underscored the particularly Russian coloring of war, thereby in a sense replicating the Soviet historical excision of the Jewish experience. Echoing complaints by Afghan war vets, Jewish commemorations bring up the issue of *who belongs* in May 9 commemorations, as public events tend to portray the heroism of war while ignoring its questionable ethics and dirty secrets.

Writing about Jewish and Soviet accounts of WWII, Amir Weiner describes a discursive intersection between ethnic particularism and universal suffering that aptly describes the event above. But while in the event I witnessed this tension seemed to foment dissent, Weiner (citing Aleksei Surkov), also describes how post-war memory and wartime suffering facilitated the strengthening of Jewish community solidarity:

There were times when we thought that the process of Jewish assimilation was being intensified by dint of the historical logic of Soviet conditions, and that the Jewish problem was being solved by itself. Then came the war with its horrors, then the aftermath. All of a sudden Jews began to seek each other out and cling to one another. (Aleksei Surkov in Weiner 2001:207–208)

Weiner even contends that such memories may have had a significant impact on the political shape of Soviet-Jewish relations:

Conventional wisdom points to the establishment of the state of Israel and the unfolding cold war as the primary causes for the deterioration in the status of the Jewish community within the Soviet polity . . . . Often glossed over, however, is the centrality of the living memory of the war and the Jewish genocide in shaping the course of Soviet-Jewish relations and providing them with a constant point of reference in the years following the war. (Weiner 2001:207)

In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, as in Weiner's accounts of the Ukraine, there seems to be a need to commemorate the specific Jewish experience of the war in order to offset the public emphasis on pan-Soviet suffering. Indeed, the tension between ethnic particularism and universal suffering is present in many WWII commemorations I witnessed in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, from Kazakh to Jewish to Uygur events. In this way, World War II commemorations reflect the long shadow of Soviet nationality policies, the subsuming of specific identities within a general ideological identity as Homo Sovieticus.

### **May 9 on Red Square**

The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory Day Celebration on Red Square in Moscow on May 9, 2005, was a gala event lasting several hours with many world leaders in attendance. The Moscow celebration was broadcast in full throughout Kazakhstan, both live and in multiple subsequent airings, and I watched it on television in Almaty later that night. Like the many state-sponsored festivals I observed in Kazakhstan, this celebration defined the position of the state, both in relation to its internal multiethnic population, and also in terms of its international relations. The Red Square event accomplished this on several fronts. First, it drew the world's attention to the USSR's overwhelming importance in the winning of WWII, and in doing so, affirmed Russia's power. And second, for perhaps the first time in such a ritualistic way, it pulled together the former Soviet states in an acknowledgment of shared history and the possibility (necessity?) of future understanding and cooperation. With performances by renowned Russian pop stars like Iosef Kobzon and Alla Pugacheva, the event also featured *inscenarovki* similar to those seen in the children's May 9 celebrations. In portraying the heroism and suffering of Soviet citizens during the war, the event reflects the Soviet legacy in a way that carries meaning both domestically and abroad.

Prior to the fireworks of the main event, in a more private and somber occasion, Putin, together with heads of state from the CIS, including Nazarbaev, acknowledged the heroism of the Soviet soldiers and civilians during the war and commemorated their joint victory. As they lay flowers at the eternal flame in Moscow, the CIS leaders tacitly acknowledged their shared history, after which Putin put aside this semi-domestic aspect of the celebrations and moved on to the gala event.

The first *inscenarovka* (a musical, dramatic, and cinematic reenactment, similar to the school skits), performed on Red Square at the start of the festivities, bore a strong resemblance to the opening staging of both the Russian concert and the children's skits described by my informants. The *inscenarovka* began with baby-faced teenagers marching across the square in a straggling line to the song, "Goodbye, Boys" (*Do Svidaniia Mal'chiki*), as young women dressed as schoolgirls waved goodbye. The boys were in civilian dress, some wearing caps of the forties era, while the colors of the props and costuming, all shades of black, gray, and white, gave the impression of a black and white movie. As the new recruits headed off, the sound of marching grew deafening. Tank-like structures rolled out onto the square and soldiers scattered across the square from different directions. This scene described the making of soldiers from a ragtag bunch of teenagers, and telegraphed the fear and chaos of enlistment, and the inevitability of war.

As the boys gathered around the tanks into groups, the girls, in wide black skirts and white blouses, each danced with a wide swath of bright red material. In the middle of the square were several structures—clusters of black wooden beams joined into black X's—scattered across the staged area. The girls danced around the stark black structures as if dancing with death. They then wrapped the red fabric as scarves around their heads and raised one hand, assuming the image of the Soviet poster, *Za Rodinu Mat'* (For the Motherland)! Just as boys were transformed

into soldiers, girls assumed the image of the homeland, in essence becoming the motherland the soldiers were fighting for. Through this dual transformation, the romantic bond between girl and boy was refashioned into a bond between soldier and motherland.

The opening act was followed by a series of songs, *inscenarovki*, and video images that portrayed specific cities and battles, such as the Leningrad blockade, the battles of Stalingrad, Volgograd and Sevastopol. The Leningrad *inscenarovka* depicted a line of trucks filled with women and children, wrapped in blankets from the cold, while footage on the screen above shows trucks crossing the frozen Lake Ladoga, some falling through the ice.

After the series of battle scenes, the celebration of victory began with soldiers dancing with civilian young women to a range of music from 1940s pop tunes, to Russian virtuosic accordion, then to a Russian folk song, “Valen’ki” performed in a folkloric style with characteristic whoops and tense high vocals, accompanied by onstage musicians dressed as soldiers (Russian accordion, guitar, *balalaika*) as well as an offstage orchestra. This Russian-infused dance medley was followed by an Edith Piaf lookalike singing two of her most well-known songs, “Non, rien de rien,” and “Ma vie en rose.” After this, a female performer in uniform sings the popular Russian folk song, “Katiusha” in Russian, English, and French.

The gala finished with a video collage retrospective of the past 60 years since World War II. The video, projected onto large screens erected on the staged area of the square, was set to a live performance of Bulat Okudzhava’s song “*Gorit i Kruzhetsya Planeta*” (The Planet Burns and Spins). The singer, handsome, middle-aged, with a solemn and striking deep bass, gave a dramatic performance as he stood on a tank painted with the words “Za Rodinu!” (For Homeland!). While the song is a popular war song, written for the film “Belorussian Station,” the video was a somewhat unexpected collage of post-war images, including footage of a lunar

landing, scenes from various Olympiads, brief clips of Gandhi, and footage from the aftermath of terrorist acts. The combined video and song lyrics seemed to convey that “we” share one world, and that we are all in it together; triumph and tragedy are now shared. However, again, the “we” is both assumed and subsumed under political alignments. While the video conveys a kind of globalist sentiment, clearly the Western hemisphere is intended as the real “we.”

France took quite a prominent place in the Moscow celebration, with Jacques Chirac taking his seat to the right of Putin. In the musical/theatrical performance, French songs and dances were plentiful, with the emotional singing of French war-era songs in Piaf cabaret style forming the centerpiece of the celebrations. Putin thereby kept the US at arm’s length, while linking Russia to France (socialist, with a strong imperial history, a bastion of liberty, and with a penchant for chansons). Thus, Victory Day celebrations allowed Putin to stake out a new path for Russia—something that he had been trying to do for some time—both as an important, though independent, ally of western Europe, and as a leader in Eurasia.

## **Conclusion**

Just as the Second World War was instrumental in solidifying Soviet ideology and state power, so too the commemoration of Victory Day in 2005 served a similarly definitive function. The widespread celebration of the 60th anniversary of May 9 throughout the CIS forced a revisiting of the Soviet legacy and the reprocessing of shared history, while providing a showcase for Russia’s state ideology and newly repositioned stance vis à vis Europe, the U.S. and the rest of the former Soviet states.

The use of war songs and *inscenarovki* in war commemorations helps to establish a communal imagining about World War II, thus outlining the general shape of communal remembering of this period in history. As Weiner suggests, memory and commemoration play a

role in shaping politics. So too, these dramatic and musical events help to steer the public imaginary along ideological lines, emphasizing how this historical event will be remembered, and indicating who is to be included in these memories.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **Islam and National Ideology**

While Kazakhstan is a staunchly secular state, President Nursultan Nazarbaev balances secular governing with support for Islamic cultural and historical programs. Though he is careful to distance himself from fundamentalist Muslim leaders, Nazarbaev stresses his own Muslim identity in widely publicized, often televised events, such as Muslim holidays and mosque openings. In Kazakhstan, where only a small percentage of Muslims attend mosque, go on hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), or pray regularly, it is the cultural aspects of Islam that many identify as key to their Muslim identity. This identity in Kazakhstan thus resides in calendrical changes and everyday habits of feasting, fasting, and the maintenance of personal networks and relationships. The state similarly highlights the cultural aspects of Islam by entwining Muslim heritage (particularly early philosophy and architecture) with Kazakh national identity. In addition to promoting Islam as a national symbol, the state also uses the discussion of Islam to connect with other Muslim countries and to stress common goals of peace, prosperity, and just governing in transnational forums like the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions and the Organization of Islamic Conference. Islam, as it is advanced by the Kazakhstani state, highlighting historical and cultural import as well as transnational strategies and moralities, thus articulates both national and global visions.

One of the ways I observed the expression and experience of cultural Islam was through religious healing and pilgrimage in Kazakhstan. While my study of healers and pilgrimage came about completely unexpectedly, I now consider it a valuable window on the interactions between political, economic, and personal aspects of everyday Islam. In this chapter I observe, first, how healing and pilgrimage in Kazakhstan reflect aspects of spiritual belief; and second, how these



beliefs intersect with both post-Soviet nation-building and Soviet attitudes toward Islam, shamanism, and religion in general. I also examine state involvement in these practices, including funding for the building and maintenance of shrines, and the intertwining of national ideology and spirituality at these shrines and in televised events involving shrine pilgrimage. Further, I will look at the political strategies and considerations of individual healers, the nascent institutionalization of particular healers' visions, and the conflicts, overlap, and underlying discourse involved in the interactions between different types of healers.

Before discussing beliefs and practices of Islam in Kazakhstan, however, I want to look at the discourses and terminology involved in such a discussion. In writing about Islam in Central Asia, Soviet scholars often used the terms "official" and "unofficial" Islam, a model which until recently was replicated by many Western Sovietologists and scholars of Central Asia. Other dichotomous descriptions of Islam include "orthodox" and "heterodox," and Ernst Gellner's "high" and "low" Islam (Gellner 1981). While I acknowledge that these terms are problematic, artificially dividing Islam into a scripturally based practice and "folk" expressions and practices, I also know that this terminology, particularly the Soviet approach to Islam, has had a lasting effect on local discourse. Thus, while many recent scholars argue that these constructions impose a false structure onto local beliefs and practices, this argument assumes that Muslim practices and discourses in Central Asia are somehow sheltered, pure, and untouched by transnational processes and ideology. It ignores the fact that Muslims in Central Asia are ensconced in transnational scholarly and ideological discourse about Islam. In writing about the complicated concept of "orthodoxy" among Uyghurs in Xinjiang, Paula Schrode holds that,

Defining "right" and "wrong" religious belief or practice is certainly not the concern of scholarship, but it is a central concern of the religious subjects involved. An analysis of religious discourses can hardly do without conceptualizing structures and notions of dogmatic orthodoxy within the

respective religious system . . . . The scholarly task is to highlight the social dynamics and power structures at work and not to mask them by tacitly reproducing them. (Schrode 2008:98)

Rather than rejecting out of hand the concepts of “orthodoxy” or “official” Islam as foreign inventions irrelevant to Central Asia, I hold that it is essential to understand how they articulate with local discourse, play into local practices, and affect prestige structures. The dichotomies of orthodoxy/heterodoxy and official/unofficial Islam have been around long enough in Central Asia that they have become a part of the ideological landscape. The presence of this way of thinking is apparent in the self-designations of healers I studied and in the hierarchically ordered status of different kinds of Muslim practitioners. Talal Asad writes,

Anthropologists like El-Zein, who wish to deny any special significance to orthodoxy, and those like Gellner, who see it as a specific set of doctrines “at the heart of Islam,” both are missing something vital: that orthodoxy is not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship—a relationship of power. Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy. (Schrode 2008:397)

Further, in studying practitioners of religious healing in post-Soviet Central Asia, I have observed the persistence of Soviet ideas of backwardness and charlatanism in regard to some healers, particularly those who are perceived or self-designated *baksy*, who heal through trance or hypnosis. In a phenomenon related to the above discussion of imported/local concepts, many scholars reject the description of Muslim practices in Central Asia as “syncretic,” including, for example, beliefs and practices of animism and shamanism. While I agree that the concept of syncretism, like the above analytical dichotomies, is problematic when replicated uncritically by scholars of the region, it is important to accept that it does appear in local discourse. Indeed, this discussion is intertwined with the above discussion of orthodoxy. Scholars like Azade-Ayşe Rorlich and others hold that post-Soviet Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states are

undergoing a “re-Islamization” that includes a distinct effort to “purify” Islam. This “purification” suggests that Islam, as it is practiced in the region, includes extraneous “unorthodox” elements from *other religions or belief systems*—essentially, syncretism.

My aim in bringing in these highly contentious discourses is to both highlight their problematic use *as a scholarly frame of analysis* and to recognize their place in local discourse. That said, my own goals are to move away from thinking about Islam as a fractured, eclectic mix of practices and instead understand it as a whole tradition, as Talal Asad suggests. To this end, Schrode advocates studying Islam in its “dogmatic” and “interactive” aspects—that is, looking at ideological, ideational, and discursive factors, while also taking into account the social relations—particularly power relations—inherent in Muslim belief and practice in Central Asia. This approach gets at how discourse, power, and ideology intertwine, highlights local structures of power and prestige, and allows me to identify underlying assumptions of my interviewees without accepting them as truths.

### **Historical Background and Politics of Islam in Central Asia**

Islam came to Central Asia from the eighth–thirteenth centuries, the timeline and nature of its introduction varying from region to region. The settled oasis cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Kokand, in what is now Uzbekistan, and Kashgar and Hotan in current day Xinjiang were exposed to Islam as early as the eighth to tenth centuries, while some areas of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan—with the notable exception of Taraz in southern Kazakhstan—which was a Muslim city by the tenth century, did not convert to Islam until the 1600s or 1700s. The local aristocracy in these regions, through centuries of contact with Persia, was in closer dialogue with the Muslim world, studying Muslim texts and promoting Islamic arts, sciences, and literature. The areas further north (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), as well as the area of Turkmenistan, were home to

mobile pastoralists who lived in pasturelands far from the urban centers in the south and therefore experienced less Muslim influence. With little access to mosques and medressas, these northern pastoral regions were exposed to Islam partly via wandering Sufi clerics. It is important to recognize, however, that these broad regional generalizations beg qualifying. While the urban centers around Bukhara and other oasis cities were highly influenced by Persia, linguistically and culturally, rural areas in the same region (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) were less so, and retained more Turkic, pre-Muslim practices. Similarly, though the inhabitants of the northern regions were primarily herders, they had some contact with the Silk Road—mainly through horse-trading—and were therefore exposed to the concurrent flow of ideas and teachings along this historic route. Further, it is important to recognize that Sufism, particularly Naqshbandi Sufism, has had a strong influence on Islam throughout Central Asia.

Here I want to emphasize that, while I am interested in the persistence of pre-Islamic traditions in Central Asia, I do not consider their coexistence with Muslim traditions an anomaly. In fact, quite the contrary, as the absorption of pre-Islamic beliefs and traditions into Muslim practices occurred all over the Muslim world and similar processes were and are at work in Turkey, Iran, and elsewhere. I therefore do not consider Central Asians or Kazakhs “nominal” Muslims, as some scholars have dubbed them, or consider their practices more “eclectic” than those of other regions. They simply represent a process of absorbing preexisting belief systems. Just as Christian practices in Russia (and elsewhere) retain strong veins of pagan holidays, beliefs, and practices, so too Islam in Central Asia contains elements of animism (nature worship) and related practices of shamanism (healing through trance), which were widespread in Central and Inner Asia. Zoroastrianism (sun worship), too, remains in evidence, particularly in the practices surrounding Nauryz.

During the Soviet era there was a strict curtailing of Muslim practices. In the earliest days of the Soviet Union, an organized anti-Muslim campaign included mosque closings, persecution of Muslim leaders, and *hujum*, the coerced unveiling of Muslim women. Despite this, certain loosely organized structures of Muslim community and leadership, like that of the *mahalla*, Muslim neighborhoods—a basic unit of Muslim social structure in some parts of Central Asia (particularly Uzbekistan and Tajikistan)—persisted, and were even strengthened by the fact that Soviet institutions like the collective farms tended to reinforce these local area designations rather than contradict them. As Kazakhs do not veil and had many fewer mosques than their southern neighbors, they were not as targeted by these actions. Nevertheless, they were deeply and lastingly affected by anti-Muslim campaigns, particularly the purging of religious practitioners, including mullahs, *shirakshi* (keepers of holy shrines), *emshi* (healers) and *baksy* (shamans). Soviet ideological campaigns were no less ruinous, teaching that, on the timeline of social evolution, religion belonged in the unenlightened pre-socialist past. Religious practices were considered backward, religious leaders regarded as crooked opportunists, and religious beliefs dismissed as empty superstitions of the downtrodden. If this was the Soviet approach regarding Islam, the practices of shamanism and other pre-Islamic belief systems were considered even more backward, and their practitioners blacklisted as charlatans and cheats. This view of religious healers as suspicious, marginal members of society has persisted in post-Soviet Central Asia and continues to affect discourse about healing practices in the region.

### **Islam, Cosmology, and Everyday Practice: Pilgrimage and Healers**

While many Kazakhs do not consider themselves very religious, spirituality seems to become more important when something goes wrong. It is at these points—when financial, legal, marital, and/or health problems arise—that Kazakhstanis seek the help of a *emshi* [pronounced

“yemshi”], a religious healer or soothsayer. In addition to telling fortunes, a *emshi* will often “prescribe” a new lifestyle, including fasting, giving up alcohol, and undertaking a pilgrimage. These everyday ways of being Muslim emphasize both the corporeal (food and drink, physical travel, bodily illness and healing) and personal—concerning family, marriage, work relationships, and domestic turmoil/harmony.

In fact, visitors to a *emshi* include not only Muslims, but also Christians. Both Russians and Kazakhs visit *emshis*; the *emshis* I studied were quite actively inclusive and seemed used to adapting their healing to non-Muslims. The main healer with whom I worked, Nargulia, welcomed me into her office, whose walls were hung with a carpet depicting Mecca, a painting of Jesus blessing young children, and on the second or third visit, a picture of Nazarbaev, which had been hung in a central location on the wall just behind her. Nargulia herself first self-identified as Kazakh, married to a Uyгур man. Later she admitted that while she often told people she was Kazakh, she was actually half Uyгур. When I asked Nargulia what methods she used to heal, she said, “I only heal through the Qur’an.” In addition to expressing the centrality of Islam in her healing, Nargulia’s reference to her use of the Qur’an emphasizes that her authority results in part from her studies with her mentor, a local mullah, and her command of Qur’anic texts.

Nargulia’s account of the first appearance and subsequent cultivation of her clairvoyance and healing skills is interesting on many levels. When her abilities first appeared at the age of fourteen, she explained, they were very powerful. She was able to move objects with her mind and to channel the voices of dead relatives. Her family at first rejected her claims, but after witnessing displays of her abilities, later acknowledged that there were powerful *baksys* (shamans, magicians) in her lineage. Nargulia confessed to me that, while she eventually honed

her talents into religious healing to become a *emshi*, she initially really wanted to be a *baksy*. When I asked about the differences between the two, she explained that *baksys* use dark forces, and are willing to execute what she considered “black” charms, like curses or love charms. A *baksy*’s powers, she said, are very strong and have immediate effect, while *emshis* focus on healing processes that can take many months. Her teacher, a local imam, tried to dissuade her from becoming a *baksy*, explaining that if she took that path, she would have extraordinary powers initially, but in practicing black magic, she would essentially burn too brightly—her powers would be prematurely extinguished, her life foreshortened. He explained that the “correct” road for her was through years of study, learning the Qur’an, and patient honing of her healing skills. While she was tempted by the powerful abilities of the *baksy*, she eventually consented to become a *emshi* instead. She studied the Qur’an with the imam for years, and credits him with guiding her in this direction.

This interaction between the roles and images of the *baksy* and *emshi*, and their relationship to the Qur’an and religious teaching, points to the discourse of authority and orthodoxy, of relative categories of acceptance and marginalization. Schrode observes that various kinds of healers are marginalized in comparison to other religious practitioners, such as mullahs and imams, because while the latter are called upon to perform at ceremonies of community bonding, during life cycle events like circumcision and marriage, spiritual healers are visited during times of trouble. It is precisely because of their use during negative events such as illnesses, infertility, and all manner of personal crises, and their treatment of social ills like alcoholism and domestic violence, that naturally places on these religious healers a social stigma. Related to this is the systematic stigmatization and marginalization of religious healers in this region during the Soviet era. Since religious practitioners, and particularly healers, were depicted

as backward, crooked, and charlatans in Soviet propaganda, the relative connection to authority is particularly important. Like the Soviet view of healers, the post-Soviet perspective seems to reflect a hierarchy that in some ways mirrors the Soviet social evolutionary scale measuring relative levels of “backward” and “civilized.” Today, as in the Soviet era, all religious healers are regarded with some degree of suspicion. (While many people go to them, they do not readily admit this.) Further, the degree to which healers are accepted or marginalized seems to depend upon their relationship to an “official” position and their degree of institutionalization, including methods of education. Healers like Nargulia, who heal “only through the Qur’an,” who have studied with a mullah, and can recite Qur’anic texts, are more accepted than *baksy*, whose connections to black magic and shamanism put them at the far reaches of acceptability, both in Soviet times and in post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

A session with Nargulia, a much sought after *emshi*, would normally need to be scheduled a week or two in advance. Typically, a first visit with Nargulia would start with an assessment in which she would tell a client’s fortune, including his/her past, present and future. Then, in addition to addressing specific concerns brought up by the client, she would suggest various procedures for healing or solving problems. In order to understand the assessment and healing procedures, it is necessary to explain the underlying cosmology on which Nargulia’s practices are based. She explained that she has many *rukhaniia*, spirits or angels, who are always with her and who perform different functions. Some appear to her as visual images while others are invisible but speak to her. The latter advise her as to what procedures to conduct for a given problem or illness. As such, her *rukhaniia* are essential in her work. She explains that she never makes decisions on her own; she merely carries out the tasks advised by her *rukhaniia*. Further, the *rukhaniia* seem to be involved in her healing energy, which also depends on a larger



cosmological connection. Every evening she must sit out in her courtyard under the stars. This, she explains, replenishes her powers. The energy she takes from these nighttime meditations is particularly potent on nights when the moon is full. She must do this in order to maintain her healing ability, particularly on days when she has worked for several hours with patients. If she fails to meditate, the next day her *rukhaniia* will not help her heal. When she goes to her office to attend to a client, they will not appear.

The cosmology Nargulia works with is part of a belief in a world of Muslim saints, and belief that healers and other religious practitioners have a powerful connection to the spirit world. In the same way that healers act as conduits to this other world, pilgrimage too, opens up a connection with the divine. Pilgrimage to particular shrines helps to gain the help of a particular saint, but more than that, these sacred sites are considered places of powerful energy, where the ground, air, and water seem to be affected by the spirit world. In some cases, spectacular natural sites like springs and very old trees become sites of pilgrimage. These are all ways of gaining energy from, or a connection with the spirit world, to which ordinary people, in ordinary places, do not have access. The various actions Nargulia conducts in healing must be understood within this belief system.

When I asked Nargulia about the kinds of problems her clients bring to her, she gave a long list of reasons and examples. If a client moved into a new apartment, Nargulia could “clean” the living space of bad spirits. I first met her when she was doing one such purification. She sat in the kitchen of my friend Aia’s house and read the Qur’an for several hours over a large jar of holy water. The reasons for the “cleaning” were interesting. Aia’s husband had recently left her and her young child for another woman, a situation that did not overly upset her, except that, in the absence of child support laws, her living situation was becoming tenuous and she was

worried about paying rent every month. The “cleaning” was conducted to restore order and (particularly financial) stability to Aia’s home in the aftermath of the breakup of her marriage. Another client, a middle-aged Russian woman, came on behalf of her husband and son who were not believers, and who had drinking problems. To “clean” them, Nargulia immersed their photos in holy water. After time, the images began to disappear, leaving a pure white strip, symbolizing their personal transformations. After this, she said, they should turn to a more moral, healthy way of life. From Nargulia’s explanation, it was recital of the Qur’an that gave the water its power. By reciting the Qur’an over a clear jar of water for at least three hours, she claimed to transform ordinary water into holy water. As in other forms of Islam, like Sufi chant, it is the spoken form of the Qur’an that is used to channel the divine, and the sounding of the divine texts that activates the healers’ connection with the spirit world.

Another method of healing is through animal sacrifice, a procedure Nargulia prescribed for a young woman who had a number of “obstacles” in her path. She was having trouble getting a visa for work that she had procured in another country and she was in her thirties and concerned about getting a late start on marriage and family. Nargulia told her the best way to clear her path of obstacles was to sacrifice a sheep and be “cleaned” by bathing in its blood. Her client agreed and allowed me to be present as well. In the room where the sacrifice took place, there was a large table and a low stool. Three of Nargulia’s many sons brought in the ram and lifted it, wrestling and calming it to lie still on the table. They donned skullcaps and recited a prayer, while Nargulia stood by the sheep’s head. The client, in a thin cotton robe, sat on the small stool positioned under the head of the ram. The next moment was charged and a little frightening. As the sheep’s throat was cut, Nargulia guided the flow of blood to her client’s body, thus directing the chaos of the moment to focus on her client. After being bathed in the

blood, the woman was rinsed with water. Then, hands shaking, she took the cup of the sheep's blood Nargulia had given her to drink. After the cathartic sacrifice and bathing, the sheep was carried away and the floor cleaned of blood.

Sacrifice, an important tenet of Islam, is required on *Qurban Ayt* (the Muslim feast of sacrifice) and common at other important events, like the opening of a business or a visit by an honored guest. During *Qurban Ayt*, the meat from the sacrifice is divided up among neighbors and relatives. It demonstrates piety and wealth, as well as a responsibility for those who are less fortunate. In the context of healing, sacrifice holds a slightly different but related significance. The life's blood of the sheep literally flows onto the patient, thereby transferring life energy to the person. It also cleans the person, removing the obstacles and illness. It is a purifying process. Taking a page from Victor Turner, we can consider sacrifice as a way of reaching the liminal place between life and death. Like sacred places and meditations of healers, sacrifice provides a gateway between our world and the spirit world, where the sick are touched and healed by sacred energy.

Interestingly, I saw this same practice performed virtually identically in a recent Kazakhstani film titled *Baksy*. However, in the film it was not a *emshi* but a *baksy* who performed the bathing. This emphasizes the overlap in practices between the two kinds of healers. Scholars and healers in the region have articulated the idea that, while *emshi* may practice procedures that normally carry negative associations when performed by *baksy*, it is not the practice that is demonized, but rather the figure. In other words, the nature of the healing depends on the practitioner. This relates to the idea that healing energy, the power healers channel from the spirit world, is essentially morally neutral, and thus it only varies depending on who is using it and for what purpose. Although Nargulia uses some practices that are associated

with *baksy*, particularly bathing a patient in sheep's blood, and the use of a *kamsha* (whip) for some illnesses and conditions, her system, in its entirety, is based on her belief in the healing power of the Qur'an and her *rukhaniia*. And it is Nargulia's study and use of the Qur'an that, according to her, separates her practices from those of a *baksy*.

Some scholars have noted a distinct generational variation among healers in present-day Central Asia. Habiba Fathi describes this phenomenon among *otin-oyis* (female religious practitioners) in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan:

Those I am calling "traditional" *otin-oyis* . . . practice an Islam based on the world of saints, ancestor worship and the recital of poems or religious texts in chanted form glorifying divine love . . . . They have knowledge of classical Central Asian poetry of Sufi popular lyrics and during any religious ritual they always mix poetry or lyrics in Arabic. Although this form of Muslim practice contains elements of shamanism or sorcery, it is considered fully Islamic by its practitioners.

The reformist *otin-oyis* or *bibi-khalifes* not only want to reform the behavior of Muslim women, but also to purify Islam from what they see as non-Islamic accretions such as the veneration of holy tombs or the "return" of the soul of the dead during a religious ceremony. These "new" *otin-oyis* oppose the old generation of *otin-oyis*, claiming they are ignorant about Islam. (Fathi 2006:309-10)

I have noticed a similar difference between middle-aged and young healers in Kazakhstan. Younger healers tend to eschew practices seen as non-Muslim (whips, etc.) and closer to shamanic traditions, and to suggest changing one's lifestyle. Aq-Sara, a young healer in her twenties, generally kept her head covered, fasted at Ramadan, used prayer more consistently in her healing/soothsaying and gave her clients "prescriptions" for living a purer life. She urged them to stop drinking and smoking, to pray, and to be better Muslims. One client of Aq-Sara's was having myriad health problems as well as difficulty finding work and marriage prospects. At Aq-Sara's suggestion she gave up drinking and smoking and took a trip to southern Kazakhstan, where she met with potential in-laws and visited pilgrimage sites. During the trip she tried to

conduct herself differently. Normally outgoing, even boisterous, she joked that she was going to have to change her demeanor and become a “good Kazakh girl.” While Nargulia conducted various procedures to “fix” people’s problems, Aq-Sara placed more of the burden of change on the client, a technique that was often difficult to effect. When an engagement did not come to pass, the client became disillusioned, stopped going to Aq-Sara, and returned to her previous lifestyle.

In addition to healing clients, Nargulia also taught other healers and had plans to build a school for healers. Indeed, construction was already underway when I last visited her. The construction of the school, sort of an institutionalization of the practices of a *emshi*, was fraught with political and financial concerns. Nargulia considered her work a sort of preservation of national cultural knowledge that contributed in a small way to Nazarbaev’s nation-building. She tried to obtain government funding for her school, but was turned down. However, she was later approached by Saudi investors interested in supporting its construction and functioning. Concerned that they would attempt to control the content and direction of her teaching, she refused their offer. The first floor was to be for the training of Muslim healers and the second floor for non-Muslim healers. The building would also serve as a dormitory to house clients from out of town. Many of her patients came from quite distant regions of Kazakhstan and even Russia, and were hard pressed to find affordable housing in Almaty’s sky-high real-estate market.

Nargulia has very definite ideas about the role of healers and the use of “correct” healing methods, which, if the school opens, will be passed on to her students. While I do not doubt that Nargulia has unusual powers of observation and perhaps of healing, she also possesses tremendous charisma and business savvy. She has her finger on the pulse of the people and is

quick to both identify influential ideas, beliefs, and leaders, and to vary her line according to her clients. Another charismatic healer in Kyrgyzstan, Zhanishbek Nazaraliev apparently had similar sway with his clients. He claimed to have had a major hand in sparking the Tulip Revolution by encouraging his massive clientele to participate in the Bishkek protests (Evans 2005). Healers, by nature charismatic and keenly observant, furthermore find their calling in the midst of personal and spiritual upheaval. If, as the Kyrgyz healer suggests, they have the power not only to gauge but also to influence the direction of this turmoil, they are not only healers, but also grassroots political figures. This intersection between morality and politics is a powerful pairing, which we will also see on a national level.

### ***Pilgrimage***

One of the healing procedures *emshis* sometimes prescribe is pilgrimage. Pilgrimage usually involves travel to the shrines of several saints, often in a specific order. Of the pilgrimage routes I observed, one was in Almaty *oblast*, in the countryside outside of Almaty, and two were in southern Kazakhstan. One of the latter, Korkyt's shrine, near Kyzylorda and the Baikonur Space Station, is frequented by cosmonauts before they go into space. Another pilgrimage, north of Shimkent, includes what are considered the most holy shrines in Kazakhstan, the twelfth-century tomb of Aristambap and the medieval city of Turkistan,<sup>34</sup> the birthplace of Sufi philosopher and poet Hodja Ahmet Yassau. The city of Turkistan has historical records going back to the fourth century, but many of the buildings standing today, including the tomb of Hodja Ahmet Yassau, were built in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries during the city's period of cultural and economic flourishing. Revered for its historical

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<sup>34</sup> The city Turkistan, in southern Kazakhstan, is sometimes spelled “Turkestan,” which is also the historic name of a larger region stretching into northwest China. To avoid confusion, I use “Turkistan,” which is in any case the Kazakh spelling of the city's name.

significance and importance to Islam in Kazakhstan, Turkistan is considered a kind of local equivalent of a *hajj*<sup>35</sup> and is visited year-round by pilgrims and tourists from all over the country.

The pilgrimage around Almaty is a smaller, more local affair. The *emshi* who guided us was a young Kazakh woman in her twenties. Every weekend she took a busload of pilgrims on this route, which included stops at the shrines of Kainazar, Sarybay batyr, Suyunbay aqyn, Toktibay, Zhambyl Zhabay, and Nurgissa Tlindeev. Many of those buried at the shrines on this route are members of Nazarbaev's clan. While the shrines have been marked for nearly a century, they have recently received government funding to build more substantive gates, sculptures, and small buildings.

Suyunbay's shrine is one of those recently renovated. Located in the open countryside about an hour's drive from Almaty, it is one of the more impressive roadside shrines in the area. Made of detailed red brick, with a silver dome, the shrine is a beautiful small building, perched on the top of a small rise in the steppe. From the dark interior of the square building, images emerge in the patterning of light cut away from the brick walls. Portrayed in the brickwork are images of a wolf, the symbol of Suyunbay's clan, and, running up one interior corner, the outlines of a *dombra*, indicating his profession. A separate small building contains a plaque stating that this shrine was built at the order of President Nazarbaev in 2000. A black stone said to have been transported from Mecca is embedded into the wall.

Both the presidential sign-off and the rumored connection with Mecca give Suyunbay's shrine a particular importance and authority in this area. For the shrine-keepers, relatives of Suyunbay himself, who depend on revenue generated from pilgrims' donations, this special status has financial value. The more pilgrims a shrine can attract, the more revenue the shrine

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<sup>35</sup> Some consider three pilgrimages to Turkistan to be the equivalent of a *hajj*.

will generate. Rumors and stories about miracles occurring at shrines (and possibly the story about the stone from Mecca) also help to generate attention and attract pilgrims. Furthermore, because Suyunbay is of the same clan as Nazarbaev, his shrine has received special backing by the government, as the beautifully built new complex attests.

### ***Sacred Embodiment and Emplacement***

At a pilgrimage site, pilgrims often perform some kind of action that connects them physically to the place of pilgrimage, such as tracing the physical space of the site. In Kazakhstan this often includes touching the shrines' walls, tiles or other architectural features, or circumambulating the shrine while tracing the outer wall with one's hand. There is also commonly a physical interaction with some element of the natural surroundings—soil, air, or water. At Toktybay's burial site, an informal shrine built by local farmers, pilgrims lie on the grassy mound within the shrine and roll three times over the ground. Visitors I went with remarked that the air felt different within the shrine. Similarly, at Zhambyl shrine, about 40 kilometers outside of Almaty, the air was believed to be particularly pure, and other visitors noted that as soon as they entered the gates of the shrine compound they could feel this purity of air in the intake of breath. At other shrines pilgrims drink the well water, thereby reaping the healing or purifying effects of the sacred site. In Aristambab in southern Kazakhstan, the dry dusty soil from the shrine's courtyard is considered holy, and many pilgrims swallow a pinch of it for medicinal purposes. In essence, by taking the site of pilgrimage into one's own body, through breath, touch or ingestion, a pilgrim can absorb the site's power—a kind of embodiment of the sacred moment and place. In many cases pilgrims leave behind visible markers, commonly strips of white cloth on branches or at holy wells, for example around the well at Turkistan and



on the branches along the path to Aristambap. The act of pilgrimage thus also marks the grave as a place of reverence.

### ***Musician Shrines***

In traveling on various pilgrimages, I was surprised that such a high number of these shrines are those of musicians. I think this has to do with the elevated status of key musicians in Kazakh national culture. This can be attributed to two factors: the importance of oral forms of cultural production in the absence of early written language and the connection between musicianship and spirituality (particularly animism and shamanism). The physical interaction with nature that can be observed in pilgrimage in this region is a part of Kazakh musicianship as well. There is a common conception that Kazakh music—particularly the spectacular gifts of memory and improvisation among epic-singers (*zhynrau*) and poet singers (*aqynlar*)—comes from the ground on which one is born. Musicians, like saints and healers, carry a spiritual power that ordinary people do not possess, particularly because their roles in Kazakh society included that of healers, historians, and social critics. As *aqynlar*, *zhynraular*, and shamans, musicians have a special place in Kazakh history and are revered as national treasures, important figures in national history and culture.

Musicians singled out for pilgrimage run a wide gamut, from Soviet composers to the mythical musician Korkyt, said to have lived in the ninth century. The grave and residence of the famous *aqyn* Zhambyl has been a tourist destination since the Soviet era, and is now part of the pilgrimage circuit outside of Almaty. Along the road leading up to Zhambyl shrine, the musician's likeness is carved into the hillside, underscoring the history of Kazakhs' dependence on the natural world (as mobile pastoralists). The image of Zhambyl on the hillside also references his nickname, the "poet of the steppe," and birthplace—the poet singer was named

after the nearby Zhambyl mountains. Zhambyl was singled out as a *Soviet* representative of Kazakh culture and promoted by Soviet officials (while other *aqynlar* were conversely silenced). An interesting combination of museum and shrine, this memorial, built in 1945, still attracts many visitors and pilgrims, despite Zhambyl's awkward reputation as a mouthpiece of the Soviet state. The site, which was also Zhambyl's residence, continues to house his family members, who also act as tour guides. A second shrine, that of Soviet composer Nurgissa Tlindeev, has since been added on the grounds. At Tlindeev's shrine, an imprint of his hand in brass is embedded in a block of black granite below his statue. A guide explained to us that a visitor to the shrine, particularly one "undertaking a creative work [*tvorchestvo*]" of some kind (often writers, musicians, or artists) should place her hand on the composer's brass handprint to ensure success. Tlindeev is widely revered as one of the greatest Kazakh composers.

At many of these shrines it is common to see images of instruments, rather than portraits of the musicians themselves. The same pilgrimage route includes the shrine of Toktibay, a *qobyz* player and shaman. His grave, a grassy mound, is marked only by a small sign and the image of a *qobyz* depicted below a Muslim crescent fashioned in the grillwork above the entrance to the makeshift shrine. Toktibay was a shaman who used the *qobyz* to heal, and his resting place is still considered to have healing properties. Suyunbay, whose shrine also lies along this pilgrimage route, was an *aqyn*, a poet-singer who accompanied himself on *dombra*. The architecture of his shrine depicts the physical and sonic aspects of the *dombra*. The long neck and body of the *dombra* runs along the interior corners of shrine, while the brickwork on the walls represents the sound waves from the *dombra* reaching up to the sky. [This explanation was given to us by the guardian of the shrine, an elderly man who doubles as a kind of tour guide for visitors and pilgrims.]

Another important musician shrine is that of legendary *qobyz* player Korkyt, in southern Kazakhstan. Korkyt, a national hero, is said to have been a shaman and musician who lived in the ninth century. Funded by the central government, the Korkyt shrine is built high on a hill above an otherwise featureless plain and the main lasting impression of the place is the tremendous wind that blows ceaselessly through the shrine complex. At the center of a circular terrace there is an amphitheater for concerts, and to one side stands a tall sculptural figure constructed to represent the *qobyz* in sound and image. Partially embedded within the sculpture is a cluster of pipes that wail when the wind blows through them; according to the shrine's guide these are meant to emulate the melancholy sound of a *qobyz*. Below this is a small shrine topped with shaman's bells to which visitors have attached strips of handkerchiefs. The guide explained that we were to listen to the sound of the "*qobyz*" and make a wish.

Before the twentieth century the *qobyz* was the Kazakh shaman's trance-inducing instrument of choice, and many famous *qobyz* players claim shamans in their family tree. Throughout Central and Inner Asia, the shaman's instrument—whether drum, fiddle, or jew's harp—represents the shaman's connection to the spirit world. The sound of the instrument is the key medium in inducing trance and opening a gateway to the spirit world. In Siberia and other parts of Inner Asia the instrument is the physical representation of the shaman's helping spirit. The making of the instrument is a lengthy and important process, and in some parts of Inner Asia, shamans would perform an "enlivening" ceremony before the instrument could be used. This would call the spirit into the instrument. The *qobyz* is made of a single piece of wood, skin and horsehair, and, like the Mongolian horsehead fiddle (*morin huur*), it carries animist associations. Several popular *qobyz* compositions use the instrument to imitate animals, most commonly a swan or a wolf. Several *qobyz* teachers pointed out to me that the back of the *qobyz*

resembles the body of a swan, its long neck stretching forward in flight. Considering the *qobyz*'s animist associations, it is interesting that the shrine's architects took advantage of the natural features and acoustics of the place (the wind blowing over the open steppe) to represent this instrument. In this way, the sonic sculpture interacts with its natural environment, underscoring the shamanic use of the *qobyz*'s sound as a conduit to another world.

Korkyt is a mythical figure, a shaman, composer, and holy man, said to have wandered the world in search of the meaning of life, returning to the Syr Darya region only toward the end of his life. According to legend, he met his end playing the *qobyz* by the banks of the Syr Darya when a giant snake rose up out of the river, swallowed him, *qobyz* and all, and then disappeared once again into the murky depths. Another version of the story holds that, after traveling around the world, and knowing the end was near, Korkyt sat by the Syr Darya playing continuously day and night, with the knowledge that if he continued to play, he could not die. Finally, exhausted, he stopped playing and died, at which point the giant snake swallowed his body. Central to the Korkyt legend is his music; figuring prominently in Korkyt stories, it is his *qobyz* that represents his channel of both divine wisdom and healing. With several *küis* in the present *qobyz* repertoire attributed to him, he is an important figure in Kazakh music, representing, according to many Kazakh musicians, scholars, and politicians, both the “ancient” roots of Kazakh music and its connection to spiritual power. Similarly, his shrine and museum emphasize the spiritual and national implications of the instrument.

The Korkyt museum within the shrine complex features displays that highlight this connection between spirituality and Kazakh nationalism. It also includes references to Islam, despite the fact that Korkyt's lifespan preceded Islam by several centuries. One interesting display is a small dark chamber, lit by black lights, in which a bronze sculpture of a *qobyz* is

suspended from the ceiling. Upon entering the small space, I recognized an ethereal *qobyz* piece, attributed to Korkyt, playing through the sound system. The profusion of images about the chamber represent different aspects of the divine and of ancient cosmology, including a *shangyrak* (the smoke hole of a Kazakh yurt used by astronomers to read the stars, a symbol of Kazakh cosmology) projected on the ceiling, replicas of local petroglyphs on the walls, and the eight-pointed star (*khatim* or *khatim sulayman*, seal of the prophets, a Muslim symbol), projected onto the floor in green light.

In an adjacent room, a plaque on the wall includes the following quote from president Nursultan Nazarbaev:

We have not remembered our grandfathers (as we should have), Asan kaigy and Korkyt, our wise men, Koja Akhmet Yassau and Al Farabi. We have not remembered our history written in Orkhon-Enisei scripts. We are Kazakhs. We are the nation who prays for their ancestors' spirits, we ride a horse calling out our ancestors' names. Therefore, only if we always remember our ancestors and glorify their names will our nation be united.

In this quote, Nazarbaev groups together a Sufi philosopher, a figure in Islamic science, a musician/shaman, and ancient written language found in regional petroglyphs in the region. Like the light and sound display I describe above, he mixes Muslim and pre-Islamic spiritual references, but succeeds in giving a picture of Kazakh spirituality, cosmology, and philosophical thought. In referencing these particular figures, Nazarbaev is trying to provide both a moral and historical backbone for his nation-building. He wants to demonstrate that Kazakhstan has not only historical depth, but is also in pursuit of spiritual depth, both in domestic matters and transnational diplomacy.

## Islam and Nation-building

Shahram Akbarzadeh and other scholars have written about the “nationalization of Islam” in post-Soviet Central Asia. Akbarzadeh writes about how, in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan,

Islam has been the object of both fear and veneration. Political Islam, that is Islam as a guide for political action, is often stigmatized as ‘fundamentalism’, ‘Wahabii’ and alien to the Central Asian brand of Islam and way of life. The negative portrayal of political Islam is in sharp contrast to the positive image of Islam and Islamic civilization, projected by state officials. (Akbarzadeh 2001:451)

In Kazakhstan, a similar process has happened. Particularly in the early years of independent Kazakhstan, Islam was treated very carefully by the state. Political aspects of Islam were carefully avoided, while cultural aspects played up, particularly in regard to Kazakh nationhood. While recent events, such as Kazakhstan’s participation in transnational organizations like the OIC, have brought Islam nominally into the political sphere on a transnational level, the state still tries to keep discussion of Islam in the cultural sphere, using inherited Islamic traditions to bolster national identity. Akbarzadeh writes that, in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan,

[State] policy toward Islam is part of a greater nation-building exercise. Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, to varying degrees, rely on assumed national treasures to justify their belated entry into the global community of “nation-states.” Propagating national history and traditions is thus pivotal to this process. It is in this context that Islam becomes inseparable from the crystallizing nationalist state ideology. Islam’s historical merger with local traditions and practices and the evolution of traditions that can be labeled as equally Islamic and national, lend it to such manipulations. (Akbarzadeh 2001:462)

In Kazakhstan as in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, there is a simultaneous safeguarding of the secular nature of the state and non-Muslim interests with the elevation of Islam as a symbol of national heritage. One focus of the Kazakhstani state’s “rediscovery” of Islamic national heritage is the mausoleum of Sufi poet and philosopher Hodja Ahmet Yassau, and the

surrounding old city. This city, called Turkistan, is one of the most important historic sites in present-day Kazakhstan, with an archeological record dating back to the fourth century. Located in southern Kazakhstan, in what is known as the Otrar oasis region, it lies on the edge of the routes of the historic Silk Road. Yassauï was born in the late eleventh century and in his lifetime Turkistan became an important city in the region. Yassauï was buried in the town and a *mazar* (mausoleum) was built within the city walls in the late fourteenth century, more than two hundred years after his death, under the orders of Timur (1370–1405), also known as Tamerlane. While Turkistan flourished well before the name “Kazakh” had emerged as an ethnic or national designation, it has nevertheless been adopted as part of a Kazakh national heritage.

Every year the national newspapers and television stations cover the president’s annual pilgrimage to Turkistan. The anniversary of Turkistan in 2000 was a major national event, marked by month-long celebrations and pre-celebration renovations of the old city. On a website devoted to this event, Nazarbaev is quoted as saying:

The celebration of the foundation of Turkestan [Turkistan], now fifteen centuries old, is a remarkable event not just for the city itself, but also for the Republic of Kazakhstan and all Turkic peoples. Our goal today is to continue the development of Turkestan as an important cultural, spiritual, scientific, and trade center in Central Asia.<sup>36</sup>

In his visits to Turkistan, and as evidenced by his speech above, Nazarbaev uses his own identity as a Muslim to connect with a national image of Kazakhs as a Muslim people. Further, he applies this identification to “all Turkic peoples,” thereby linking personal, national, and transnational Muslim identities and solidarities.

The Kazakhstani diva Roza Rymbaeva was also involved in the anniversary celebrations and produced a music video, “Turkistan,” dedicated to the event. The video is a montage of

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<sup>36</sup> <http://prosites-kazakhembus.homestead.com/Turkestan.html>, accessed January 12, 2010.

Kazakh traditions and Muslim practices, including ritual uses of milk and *kymyss* to mark the beginning of spring, horseback-riding games, and sheep sacrifice. The lyrics similarly merge Kazakh, Turkic, and Muslim identities:

We are a people with united Turkish roots,  
We are a people with a single language.  
Turkistan is a supporting pedestal  
For the Muslim people,  
For the Muslim people of a single creed.  
Expansive land, endless land,  
Of the Turkic-Kazakh people.

. . .

Refrain:  
Endless Kazakh land  
. . . Turkistan  
It became a place  
Sacred for Turkic people,  
It became the Mecca Turkistan.

. . .

The pride of Kazakhs.  
The pride of Kazakhs, this city  
Built by our ancestors  
Amazing city, Turkistan.  
The dome of Yassau Akhmet  
Became a sculpture (work of art) for our people.

Turkistan has become a national symbol, providing Kazakhstan with a history based on Muslim teachings, poetry, philosophy, and architectural magnificence, something the state desperately needs to augment its rich oral cultural and historical formations. Both Rymbaeva's lyrics and Nazarbaev's speech at the celebration stress Turkic Muslim culture and history. "We are a people with united Turkic roots. We are a people with a single language." Again, as in the previous chapters on Eurasianism and Friendship of the Peoples, we encounter the use of this ambiguous "we," in which "Kazakhs" and "Turkic Muslims" are conflated into one entity. This allows Kazakhstan to claim Turkistan and Yassau Akhmet as part of its own history, though neither can



be accurately labeled as Kazakh, as they predate the formation of Kazakhs as a nation, or even as a self-designated ethnic group. Further, Turkistan seems to be an important symbol because it represents the “right” kind of culture. Taken together, Nazarbaev and Rymbaeva describe Turkistan in connection with language, architecture and art, science, religion, and economics (trade)—in short, the building blocks of modern cultural formation. If we look again at the social evolutionary timeline that underpins much of Soviet and post-Soviet political thought, Turkistan represents the “right” stage of development needed to lay the groundwork for the building of a modern nation. While Kazakh nationalism certainly makes much of the richness of nomadic culture and oral history, it appears that Turkistan has been elevated as a national symbol precisely because it (conversely) represents the settled civilization of oasis cities along the Silk Road. Like Bukhara and Samarkand, Turkistan is a physical reminder of Central Asian history, proof in stone, tile, and ink that there was science, art, language and learning there—proof of “civilization.”

### **Islam and Eurasianism**

In addition to its inclusion in strategies of nation-building, there is also a Eurasianist element to the political uses of Islam. In a post-9/11 twist on classic Eurasianism, Nazarbaev, in a meeting of the Council of World and Traditional Religions, defined Kazakhstan’s new role as an intermediary between the Muslim world and the West. During the event, Nazarbaev explained his reasons for founding the Congress:

In 2002 when after shocking terrorism on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September a world has been threatened with [the] danger of [a] notorious “clash of civilizations,” we proposed an initiative of [a] convocation of Congress. The first forum was held in 2003.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Common World: Progress through Diversity, <http://www.embkazjp.org/additionalpages/special26102008.htm>, accessed January 12, 2010.

The Congress, which is held triennially in Astana, was established to bring together world leaders in dialogue about ways to improve Muslim-Christian relations and in general to look at moral aspects of governing and the creation of a just world. In another speech, given at the Ministerial Conference on the Common World: Progress through Diversity, held in Astana on October 17, 2008, Nazarbaev states:

The first objective is to have a frank and constructive discussion of issues of cooperation against the background of globalization of modern cultures and religions, mainly Christianity and Islam. The second objective is to establish a wide-[ranging] political dialogue among nations representing two of the largest cultural communities and civilizations of the modern world, for the sake of the future of our planet.<sup>38</sup>

For Nazarbaev, Kazakhstan, perched culturally and geographically between East and West, represents both a pivot and an example of “interconfessional harmony,” with Astana as the new capital built upon this ideology. As he stated in a speech at the Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions,

[The city of] Astana, erected at the joint of Asia and Europe, West and East, today is being turned into the centre of interaction of various nations and religions. We are proud of [the nobility of the] people of Kazakhstan, which could preserve interconfessional concord and interethnic friendship. We make our efforts to pass our experience to [the] world community. We stand up against religious oppositions and interethnic conflicts in [a] new millennium at different corners of the world . . . Therefore, I consider, that the Third Congress of leaders of world and traditional religions will play a significant role in the cause of [the] development of interconfessional concord and interaction of civilizations.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ministerial Conference on the Common World: Progress through Diversity, <http://www.embkazjp.org/additionalpages/special26102008.htm>, accessed January 12, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Address of Nursultan Nazarbayev at the III Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held on October 10, 2009 at the Palace of Peace and Concord, <http://www.religions-congress.org/content/view/197/34/lang,english/>, accessed January 12, 2010.

This address speaks to one of Nazarbaev's foundational visions for Astana, as the "Heart of Eurasia, " which he lays out in his 2005 book of the same title about the city's history and his plan for its future (Nazarbaev 2005).

When his "Heart of Eurasia" was written, Nazarbaev's Eurasianist rhetoric, strategy, and organizational alignment focused largely on political, economic, and military aspects of Eurasianism, based on the geographic and ethnic facets of Eurasianist theory—the union of Turks and Slavs, East and West. The past few years, however, have seen an increase in political rhetoric about morality, peace, and other themes of "interconfessional" concern. While no less pragmatic in nature, Nazarbaev's speeches have nearly taken on the tone of spiritual leadership. Using Islam as a moral basis, he adds yet another layer to Kazakhstani Eurasianist ideology. Speaking at the Third Congress of World and Traditional Religions (2009), he says,

Today . . . morals should be [of primary concern]. Without this significant instrument it is impossible to find [a] way out of the crisis to [a] higher [path] of [societal] development. I am convinced of it . . . . Throughout many centuries [the] unified people of Kazakhstan, enriched with spiritual heritage of various ethnos[es] and religions, took up such qualities as tolerance, toleration and openness to grasp the new. And we feel our commitment to carry down this cultivated imperative to the entire[ty of] humanity.<sup>40</sup>

Taking "interconfessional harmony" as a theme resembling *druzhba narodov* (friendship of the peoples), Nazarbaev has woven this moral imperative into Eurasianist strategies for governing and forging transnational alliances. Kazakhstan's active participation in the OIC and establishment of the Congress of World and Traditional Religions mark a new direction for Nazarbaev's relationship with the Muslim world. In stressing Muslim heritage and those aspects of Islam that can be considered universal, he manages to strike a delicate balance. While

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<sup>40</sup> Address of Nursultan Nazarbayev at the III Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held on October 10, 2009 at the Palace of Peace and Concord, <http://www.religions-congress.org/content/view/197/34/lang,english/>, accessed January 12, 2010.

distancing himself from self-proclaimed Muslim regimes, he at the same time identifies the Muslim cultural heritage of Kazakhstan and stresses the religious tolerance that has allowed multiple religions to flourish there. Further, rather than avoiding spiritual references as he has done in the past, he instead uses them to his strategic advantage in forging an ideology of peaceful coexistence and positing Kazakhstan as an intermediary between the Christian and Muslim worlds.

In the same speech, Nazarbaev, after quoting the Upanishads, the prophet Muhammad, Jesus Christ, and the Talmud, explains that,

Keepers of values and morals at all times were and continue to become spiritual leaders—pastors of various religions. That is why in these difficult times hopes are pinned on religious figures.

Positing that the “clash of civilizations,” the economic crisis, and environmental issues are all linked to a crisis in morality and spirituality, Nazarbaev states that his goal is to provide dialogue between Christian and Muslim leaders, in hopes that a moral solution to these problems will succeed where diplomacy and politics have not.

This new take on Eurasianism is perhaps not as surprising as it seems. Eurasianism, and *druzhiba narodov*, always carried a moral imperative, that of unifying diverse groups in a utopian, peaceful, and mutually beneficial coexistence. The “clash of civilizations” that intensified after 9/11 opened a new and obvious emphasis for Kazakhstan’s role as intermediary between East and West. This allowed Nazarbaev to use Islam as a way to maintain friendly relations with other Muslim countries in the region, while sidestepping the easily aroused Islamaphobia of the U.S. and Europe. In emphasizing Muslim heritage as a point of national pride, while encouraging only “universal” spiritual and moral aspects on a transnational level, he clearly defines national boundaries, avoiding any hint of pan-Islamicism.

## CONCLUSION

### Political Ideology

The above chapters have illustrated the paradox of the nation-state, which is evolving to incorporate transnational ideologies and realities as it “attempts to find its place in a globalizing world” (James 2006:301). In Kazakhstan, Islam, Eurasianism, and globalism have all become part of the state’s toolbox for integrating its population and building a balanced and nuanced diplomacy. While I see this mosaic of ideologies as a fairly new approach on the part of the Kazakhstani state—part of its forward-looking advertising—it also echoes with the strains of Soviet ideology. As the remaining former Soviet cadres of Nazarbaev’s generation serve out the last few decades of their political life, Kazakhstan, Janus-faced, remains in political and cultural limbo, facing both forward and back. Clearly attuned to the changing needs of the nation-state, the current regime, while deftly plying globalist rhetoric, also leans heavily on Soviet approaches to diversity and difference. Indeed, the Soviet legacy has become a part of post-Soviet Kazakhstani politics and culture to such an extent that it is difficult to imagine its gradual disappearance. Though Almaty’s streets are now lined with designer boutiques, trendy bars, popular Italian and Turkish cafés, and transnational restaurant chains, the cosmopolitan image of this city masks a heartbeat that is, I have argued, still very Soviet.

I have also shown how Eurasianism articulates with the Soviet-era “Friendship of the Peoples” policy. Prefaced upon different kinds of utopias, these ideologies nevertheless both stress ethnic harmony and seek ways to manage or capitalize upon ethnic difference. Both Eurasianism and the Soviet policy also essentialize ethnic minorities, the former in its claim that sociocultural characteristics are predetermined by climate and terrain; the latter, through the “museumization” of minority music, dress, and other cultural markers. Thus the overlap of these

two ideologies, which after all, both originated on Soviet soil, is accomplished with little difficulty in the context of Kazakhstani nation-building. Building upon nearly a century of Soviet governance, the state's Eurasianist approach borrows heavily from aspects of an ideology already in place.

## **Nostalgia**

In writing about the establishment of narratives and tropes central to these ideologies, I have described the role that nostalgia plays in their construction. Whether the sentimental grip of cinematic and musical mementos from the Soviet era, or the seductive visions of a future Eurasian steppe dominated by a Kazakh empire reminiscent of that of Genghis Khan, the narratives and tropes in history books and expressive culture are the threads that mend the rift between past and present. By portraying a present that “rhymes” with the past, a narrative can naturalize its own particular vision for the future. Employing what Svetlana Boym calls “restorative nostalgia,” Kazakh nationalist discourse plies the story of a glorious Kazakh nomadic past in order to validate its hegemonic aims for the future. In contrast, “reflective nostalgia,” such as the habitual viewing of old Soviet movies, aims to hold onto fragments of the past, while consciously acknowledging—perhaps even relishing—their anachronicity (Boym 2001).

Moreover this engagement with the past, particularly in the context of holiday celebrations, can become engrained as habit, in a kind of seasonal reminiscence. My treatment of winter holidays attended to films viewed on television as a part of New Year festivities. These films, prized for their apt portrayals of Soviet life, are folded into current holiday traditions. I have argued that the film viewing underscores connections between the Soviet New Year and the present New Year by highlighting the repetition of holiday habits. Fragments of a bygone era,

the lives in these films are nonetheless rendered closer, the experience more real, by the very similarity to the real-life celebrations they accompany.

Soviet war songs and movies also represent an important connection to the past. Reflecting nostalgia for lost youth and martyred sweethearts, many war songs are as much about the narrators' childhood as about the war. They describe a vast rift that separates pre- and post-war life. Sonic mementos for those who lost everything, war songs are often seen as the only thing left of that time. While they create a connection to the past, performances of these songs and the staged reenactments that accompany them can also throw into confusion the sense of place. Patriotic feeling, like nostalgia for childhood, is an emplaced emotion. One can hardly reminisce without placing those memories in a particular house or city; similarly, patriotism requires a country to fix upon. Because May 9 glorifies a country that no longer exists, the necessity of ascribing such an emotion to a particular place (and nation) creates a tension between current nationalist sentiment and loyalty to the Soviet Union. Memorials, reenactments, and other organized forms of national nostalgia, while opening the door to the tension created between multiple identities and loyalties, also allows a reprocessing of those seminal war years and a revisiting of shared history.

### **Calendars, Rhythmicity, and Cosmology on Television**

Another subject that I have discussed in conjunction with holidays is Eviatar Zerubavel's concept of rhythmicity. I use this concept to describe the human experience of time and all that is connected with it, including the changing of the seasons, the cycle of celebrations, and the making of the national calendar. I have discussed how humans expect and need a rhythmic patterning to their days, weeks, and years and how regime change, in interrupting that expected order, throws things off-balance. More than a decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union,

Kazakhstan is still feeling the effects of this disruption in spatial and temporal ordering. Still using old maps and calendars—to some extent—and not yet fully accustomed to the new street names and holidays, Kazakhstan, like many other post-Soviet states, is still somewhat in transition.

At various points in this dissertation, I have revealed television's flirtation with cosmology and discussed the central seasonal tropes that are reflected in holiday programming, particularly that of mid-winter and Nauryz. I looked at themes associated with *sviatki*, a time when, according to Russian folklore, the border between earth and the spirit world is porous. Much as Russian folk tales depict *sviatki* as a time of chaos when good villagers lose their grip on sanity and goblins and devils wreak havoc in the countryside, so too in Soviet films associated with the New Year and Old New Year there is a confusion of self, place, and time. In bard songs set to poems by Boris Pasternak, we hear the language of *sviatki*'s chaos accompanying images of the Soviet city. A Soviet interpretation of an older tale of this period, these films convey a new context for mid-winter's supernatural disturbance and provide commentary on the sense of place in a society that enforces a high degree of uniformity. Conveying layers of cosmology, from the pre-Christian winter solstice to Russian Orthodox/Russian peasant belief to Soviet-era celebrations of drinking, holiday travel and the communal bathhouse, I have shown how television reflects very old ideas about the seasons.

Nauryz programming reflects a cosmology that includes aspects of the Kazakh zodiac and Inner Asian mobile pastoralist approaches to seasonal change. I have looked at Nauryz television programs that reflect dualistic Tengrian concepts surrounding the vernal equinox; Kazakh folklore about the cycling of zodiac years and the animals who govern them; and Kazakh



rituals for both calendrical and life cycle celebrations that derive from aspects of mobile pastoralist lifeways, such as the first milk of spring and the livestock birthing seasons.

Television, like other aspects of everyday life, reflects the central tropes and folklore surrounding the seasons and reflects the myriad cosmologies that inform how humans order time. Added to this are the nationalist articulations of these cosmologies, which spin folkloric concepts into nation-building strategies. Thus Tengrian ideas about nature are incorporated into narratives that encourage the continuation of pastoral Kazakh holiday traditions in modern life. At the same time, as I have discussed, televised nostalgia latches onto core seasonal tropes, helping the viewer to hold onto fragments of past eras. In the same way that place anchors a bridging of the past and present, these seasonal tropes allow the reflection of simultaneous temporalities, like the way that *sviatki*'s chaos is refracted through the Soviet lens.

### **Land, Belief, and Music**

In different sections of this work I have discussed the importance of landscape and a connection to the land in Kazakh culture. I have shown how spirituality, particularly in the context of pilgrimage often requires an interaction with the land, whether through ingestion (by swallowing a bit of dust or drinking the water at sacred places); through touch (i.e., by placing one's hands on a sacred stone or the walls of a shrine); or in journeying to or through sacred space (including pilgrimage to a holy site, or the circumambulations of shrines). I have also touched upon the connection to land in music, including the myths of central figures like Korkyt, the testimony of Kazakh musicians—who told me that musicianship emanates from the land on which one is born—and the music videos that trace the outlines of Kazakh nationalism in the contours of the Kazakhstani steppe. In a way, these are all strands of the same basic idea, that the land is sacred, a concept which is itself very Tengrian/animist. Perhaps tied in with this animist

belief in a sacred landscape, but certainly perpetuated by nationalist narratives, Kazakh cultural production—as reflected in Kazakh spirituality, ideas about Kazakh musicianship, and nationalist imagery—incorporates the steppe’s importance in Kazakh ideology.

## **Religion in Kazakhstan**

I have discussed how religion articulates with transnationalism in Kazakhstan, both in the context of new religious organizations—notably the Almaty Korean church and the newly established post-Soviet Jewish organizations—and the diplomatic use of transnational Islam. I have shown how imported leadership and funding from abroad helped to establish and maintain the Korean church and the Almaty synagogue. In this way, the diasporic nature of the Soviet Korean and Jewish populations facilitated the flourishing of transnational religious flows and structures—both ideational and financial—among these groups.

In a related discussion, I examined the state’s use of Islam as a transnational bridge. While Nazarbaev earlier in his presidency essentially avoided engagement with Islam, both as a subject and a practice, he has recently begun to speak of Islam as providing a moral basis for governing and of a kind of universal spirituality as a way to negotiate the “clash of civilizations.” Plying the slippery language of inclusion and exclusion, Nazarbaev manages to imply that Kazakhstan is and is not Muslim. He alternately describes his country as Muslim, as “interconfessional,” and as secular with Muslim roots. Further, in promoting Kazakhstan as a population of diverse faiths, Nazarbaev positions Kazakhstan as a natural negotiator between two fundamentally different civilizations. This is the spiritual version of Friendship of the Peoples; like the latter ideology, which also targeted the managing of diversity, Nazarbaev’s interconfessional morality reflects both inward, shaping his domestic policies, and outward, to inform his carefully balanced diplomacy with OIC states and the West.

## **Final Thoughts**

In my analysis of expressive culture in Kazakhstan, I have discussed post-Soviet permutations of, extensions of, and reactions to Soviet ideology and legacy. The post-Soviet realms of politics, belief, ethnicity, and celebrations all articulate with those of the Soviet Union. It must be said, though, that Almaty—and Kazakhstan in general—is changing very quickly. Five years ago, Muslim holidays, though widely celebrated, were not in the public eye; in 2010 they have become more and more visible in the public sphere. Islam has a greater presence on Kazakhstani television and I have met more young people who are either observant Muslims themselves or who cite religion as an important part of governing. Too, Kazakhs have become a more powerful majority, and in my experience, Russian resentment of their minority status and of the rising use of Kazakh throughout the city, in both official and unofficial contexts, has begun to grow. Though Nazarbaev is in good health, and, like Lenin, seems somehow to be miraculously preserved, he is beginning to age, and many Kazakhstanis are fearful of the subsequent chaos that could ensue if he ends his long term in office without naming a clear successor. While many are critical of Nazarbaev's iron grip on the media and political opposition, he is generally well regarded for his maintenance of stability in this Central Asian state surrounded by so much regional instability. Many are doubtful whether a successor will be able to maintain the delicate balance he has forged, both domestically and abroad, particularly with regard to Islam.

It will be interesting to see how the cultural and political legacy of the Soviet era will sit with this new generation of young adults who never actually experienced it first-hand. Born after the fall of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstani university students are—many of them—becoming more and more plugged in. Active on Facebook, mail.ru, youtube, and other web-based social

interfaces, and knowledgeable about how and where to access information on the internet, urban-based students are not likely to have as strong an attachment to old Soviet movies and other cultural icons of the Soviet period. As the Soviet baby-boomers age, it will be interesting to see how much of the Soviet influence fades with them.

## Glossary of Terms

*asatayaq*: a shaman's rod, hung with bits metal

*aitys*: a competition between two poet-bards, or *aqynlar*.

*aqyn*: (pl. *aqynlar*) a poet-bard who performs solo improvised song, with *dombra* accompaniment

*dombra*: a two-stringed, plucked lute with nylon strings

*küi*: (pl. *küiler*) an instrumental genre associated with a narrative and with Kazakh philosophy

*qobyz*: a two-stringed, bowed lute with skin head

*qongyrau*: bells

*saqpan*: rattles

*shangqobyz*: a jaw's harp

*syldyrmaq*: shaken metallic pendants

*tokyldaq*: rattles

*tuyaq tas*: horse hoofs, played by clapping them together

*sybyzgy*: an end-blown flute

*zhetigen*: a 7-stringed zither

*zhyr*: epic song

*zhyrau*: (pl. *zhyraular*) an epic singer

## APPENDIX A

### Songs and Poems in Original Language

#### CHAPTER THREE

##### **Песня не прощается с тобой!**

Ночью звёзды вдаль плывут по синим рекам,  
Утром звёзды гаснут без следа,  
Только песня остаётся с человеком,  
Песня верный друг твой навсегда.  
Через годы, через расстояния,  
На любой дороге, в стороне любой  
Песне ты не скажешь “до свидания,”  
Песня не прощается с тобой!  
Наши песни носим в сердце с колыбели,  
С песней всюду вместе мы идём,  
Сколько песен мы любимым нашим спели,  
Сколько мы ещё с тобой споём!  
Через годы, через расстояния,  
На любой дороге, в стороне любой  
Песне ты не скажешь “до свидания,”  
Песня не прощается с тобой!

В лютый холод песня нас с тобой согреет,  
В жаркий полдень будет как вода,  
Тот, кто песни петь и слушать не умеет,  
Тот не будет счастлив никогда!  
Через годы, через расстояния,  
На любой дороге, в стороне любой  
Песне ты не скажешь “до свидания,”  
Песня не прощается с тобой!

#### CHAPTER FOUR

##### **“Ёлочка Зелёная”**

Приходит нам праздник  
И праздничный город кипит  
И каждый купить дом красавицу ёлку спешит.  
И тысячи ёлок,  
Для тысячи людей,  
Приносят веселье но только за несколько дней.

Refrain:

Ёлочка зелёная . . .  
И нам на целом свете нет дерева милей.  
Ёлочку Зелёную в обиду не дадим.  
Ёлочку Зелёную детям сохрани.

Нельзя от нарядной красавицы глаз оторвать.  
Часы бьют двенадцать и нужно успеть загодать.  
Желание любое исполнит праздничный час.  
Нам нравится жить и она пусть живёт среди нас.

### **“В лесу родилась елочка”**

В лесу родилась елочка,  
В лесу она росла.  
Зимой и летом стройная,  
Зеленая была.

Метель ей пела песенку:  
«Спи, елочка, бай-бай!»  
Мороз снежком укутывал:  
«Смотри, не замерзай!»

Трусишка зайка серенький  
Под ёлочкой скакал.  
Порою волк, сердитый волк,  
Рысцою пробегал.

Чу! Снег по лесу частому  
Под полозом скрипит  
Лошадка мохноногая  
Торопится, бежит.

Везет лошадка дровенки  
На дровнях мужичок  
Срубил он нашу ёлочку  
Под самый корешок.

И вот она, нарядная,  
На праздник к нам пришла,  
И много, много радости  
Детишкам принесла.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Children's Skit in Televised Nauryz Film

1. Уа, халайық тыңдашы: Мен боламын Жыл басы! Сасып анау сиырын, қапиып екі бұйырым. Сен кімсің менің қасымда? Бар ма түйісін басыңда?
2. Жылдың көзі неме бармақтай, ұрланып барып байқатпай, қуылығыңды асырма, сырымды ішке жасырма. Шыкса екі бұйырым, сүті бұлақ сиырмын. Мен боламын жыл басы.
3. Мықты баспын! Алысқанмен алыстым, баршылық барлық бар бардылақты қорғатып. сен қай жақтан жабыстың?
4. Қорқақ емес мойнмың, зияны жоқ қоянмын! Қоян жылы қар қалың, асырап елдің бар малын. Қалың шығар егін шөп, білінер жыл басы деп!
5. Жәндіктердің ішінен ұнаған өз ісімен. Жылға лайық Ұлу мен! Құйрығы ұзын шыбалған, сақ болындар - жыланмын!
6. Бұл мен ұлы, шұбар жыланмын. Жүрген жерде ыланмын. Жолыма ешкім тұрмасын! Беріндер маған жыл басын!
7. Ер қанаты ат деген, біргемін мен адамзатпенен. Мінсе көлік, сүтімді, қымыз деген атпенен, болады адам дәріге. Жетпейсін маған бәрі де.
8. Қойдай қоңыр момын деп, мақтау көрген жылым көп. Қой жылында құт болар, мешін жылы жұт болар. Жыл басы маған құт болар!
9. Мешін деген мешінмін. Мінезіме кесірім мойындама ешкімге. Сайық, мазақ шешімім, бәрінен де пысық, сергекпін. Артықпенен менен кім? Мен боламын жыл басы!
10. Қанатты да тауықпын. Сеземін бәрін қауыптың. Айқайлап таңда аттырған, кеш батса үйге шақырған. Жүрсекте қайда, біз адамға барып қайтамыз. Бізге лайық жыл басы!
11. Суық та да төзіммен, түнде жортқан бөріден, малын қорғап келемін адамзаттың тегінен. Ырыс дейтін ит жылы! Бас боламын тегі мен!
12. Ұмытпандар мені де, демендер жылдан қол үзді. Келсем егер қорсалып, кетесіндер шошыбақ. Менің де бар керегім! Жыл басы мен көремін!

### Comedy Routine in En Men Enshi Concert

- 1: Сержан менің мақтап, баптап, осы сайыстарға дайындап жүрген өзімнің жекеменшік ақыным бар. Қолұстазбын ғой.



- 2: Сен өзің ақын бола алмай,ақын дайындап жүрсін ба?
- 1: Сен менің мықты мықты нелерімді білмейсін ғой. Кейін мен саған айтып берем,таныстырам өзімнің шығармашылығымен. Кәзір менің шәкіртім шықсын!
- 2: Ол қандай ақын?
- 1: Ой сен байқа! Алдынала ескертіп алайын,ол кішкене нелеу....
- 2: Нелеу?
- 1: Ағасы келген кезде,нервный болып кетеді да,шыдай алмайды, содан кейін дұрыс айтыспай қалсан барғой,ағын пағын жүрий санап кетеді.
- 2: Кімді? Бізді ма?
- 1: Сені де,ақыныңды да!
- 2: Сен таяқ жийтін адам тапқан екенсін,менің де ақыным бар! Айтыстырайық!
- 1: Айтыстырайық!
- 2: Ақыныңды шақыр.
- 1: Менің ақыным қайда? Тағы нервы ұстап,бір жаққа кетіп қадған жоқ па?
- 2: Шақыр!
- 1: Ол анау мынау шақырымға шықпайды. Құрметті ағайындар,құрметті көрермендер! Менің өзі жеке дайындап жүрген,арқалы ақыным! Спортсмен,ақын,каратист,футболист,боксёрист Дора! Қалайсын? Дайынсын ба? Кішкене еңкейіп істе. Болды,бұл саған тренировка емес. Дискотекада тұрғандай бийлеп кеткен нес? Шақыр!
- 2: Талай доғалардан байдалған,талай айтыстың бас жүлдесін қанжығасынан байлаған Улан Уде! Біздің ақын бір қалыпта.
- 1: Мынау ма ақының?
- 2: Осы кісі.
- 1: Отырып ал,кім бірінші келеді,сол отырады!
- 2: Ақырын ойнасаншы ей,ұйықтаған шабытты оятып жібердің ғой. Ақырын ойна!
- Дора: Алдартын бұл жамайды ау адам деген. Жалғанның әр түтібай жалаң деген. Науырыздың бұл тойындай ағайындар сіздерге шын ниетпен сәлем берем! ай ай ай
- 1: Отыр.
- Улан Уде: Мен енді ай айтайын! Халқыма басымды иіп, сәлем берем ай! Содан соң ай жерім менің ай, саған да басымды иіп аяу,сәлем берем ай. Содан соң қарсыласым ай, саған

да басымды иіп аяу,сәлем берем. Мен келдім мұң ұядан шекарасы ай. Халқыма жақын барып айу, сәлем берем аяу.

Дора: Біледі моңғол жақтай жатқа халық, қонақты ізипатпен атқаралып. Үкіңіз басыңыздағы ау биік екен, самолёт қағып кетпесін масқара ғып!

Улан Уде: Мен келген оралманмын ай, мұңриядан ай. Елімді,жерімді аңсап аяу,туған ел топырағына басын ием ай,дәл мындай бақыт көрмес адам ылғи адам ай. Ел десеу,игіледі ақыл жием ай! Халқына Қазақстан басымды иемін ай! Алдында ой туған елім ай, бізде бүгі ай. Елінің керек десен тасын сүйем ай,тасын сүйем ай,сүйем ай... Тас бар ма?

Дора: Тас жоқ!

Улан Уде: Тас жоқ болса,ақындардың басын сүйем ай!

Дора: Қалайша бұл сәлемге ел жиылмас, ағайын қонақ екен енді Юлдаш! Бұл ұқсап басымды мен ие бермеймін, өйткені біздің бас нервный бас!

Улан Уде: Үйренген сәлем беру ай,ол жағын өнеріммен дәлелдегем ай. Бұл саған бас игенім ай аз болып тұрса,мен саған французсша сәлем берем ай!

-Құдайым кезген тірді қайдан болған, адамым осы ма еді ау арман қылған? Басым ию керек десен былай тұрсын, мен қазір шыр көбелек айналдырам ай ай ай! Басын айналдырса, айналдыра берсін, мен сәлем беріп шығайыншы!

Улан Уде: Әй тоқтай тұр ей! Саған бірге сәлем берем ай. Анасы барлық сөздің сәлем берем ай, қай жақа ой қашып құтылам деп барады ай, бәрі бір ұстап алып, сәлем берем ай!

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Баллада о солдате

Музыка: В.Соловьев-Седой, Слова: М.Матусовский

Полям, вдоль берега крутого  
Мимо хат  
В серой шинели рядового  
Шел солдат.  
Шел солдат, преград не зная,  
Шел солдат, друзей теряя,  
Часто, бывало,  
Шел без привала,  
Шел вперед солдат.

Шел он ночами грозowymi  
В дождь и град.

Песню с друзьями фронтовыми  
Пел солдат.  
Пел солдат, глотая слезы,  
Пел про русские березы,  
Про кари очи,  
Про дом свой отчий  
Пел в пути солдат.

Словно прирос к плечу солдата  
Автомат —  
Всюду врагов своих заклых  
Бил солдат.  
Бил солдат их под Смоленском,  
Бил солдат в поселке энском  
Пуль не считая,  
Глаз не смыкая,  
Бил врагов солдат.

Подем, вдоль берега крутого,  
Мимо хат.  
В серой шинели рядового  
Шел солдат.  
Шел солдат, слуга Отчизны,  
Шел солдат во имя жизни,  
Землю спасая,  
Мир защищая,  
Шел вперед солдат!

### **“В Землянке”**

(Музыка Константин Листов; стихи Алексей Сурков)<sup>41</sup>

Бьется в тесной печурке огонь,  
На поленьях смола, как слеза.  
И поет мне в землянке гармонь  
Про улыбку твою и глаза.

Про тебя мне шептали кусты  
В белоснежных полях под Москвой,  
Я хочу, чтобы слышала ты,  
Как тоскует мой голос живой.

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<sup>41</sup> From [http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Листов,\\_Константин\\_Яковлевич](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Листов,_Константин_Яковлевич), accessed January 20, 2010.

Ты сейчас далеко, далеко,  
Между нами снега и снега...  
До тебя мне дойти не легко,  
А до смерти - четыре шага

Пой, гармоника, вьюге назло,  
Заплутавшее счастье зови!  
Мне в холодной землянке тепло  
От моей негасимой любви.

### **Вальс медсестры**

(Музыка Давид Тухманов; слова Владимир Харитонов)<sup>42</sup>

Легкий школьный вальс тоже был у нас,  
У него судьба была такая:  
Помню, как сейчас, наш десятый класс  
Закружила вьюга фронтовая.

Фронтовой санбат у лесных дорог  
Был прокурен и убит тоскою.  
Но сказал солдат, что лежал без ног:  
"Мы с тобой, сестра, еще станцуем."

А сестра, как мел, вдруг запела вальс,  
Голос дрогнул, закачался зыбко.  
Улыбнулась всем: "Это я для вас", —  
А слеза катилась на улыбку.

Сколько лет прошло — не могу забыть  
Тот мотив, который пелся с болью.  
Сколько лет прошло — не могу забыть  
Мужество солдатское и волю.

### **Школьный вальс**

Музыка И. Дунаевский слова М. Матусовский<sup>43</sup>

Когда уйдем со школьного двора  
Под звуки нестареющего вальса,  
Учитель нас проводит до угла  
И вновь опять и вновь ему с утра:

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<sup>42</sup> From <http://www.izvestia.ru/world/article3105766/>, accessed January 20, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> From [http://www.vipusknoy.spb.ru/song\\_0002.html](http://www.vipusknoy.spb.ru/song_0002.html), accessed January 20, 2010.

Встречай, учи и снова расставайся,  
Когда уйдем со школьного двора.

Для нас всегда открыта в школе дверь  
Прощаться с ней не надо торопиться  
Но как забыть звончей звонка капель  
И девочку, которой нес портфель.  
Пусть потом ничто не повторится  
Для нас всегда открыта в школе дверь.

Пройдись по тихим школьным этажам.  
Здесь прожито и пройдено немало,  
Был голос робок, мел в руке дрожал,  
Но ты домой с победою бежал.  
И если вдруг удача запропала,  
Пройдись по тихим школьным этажам.

Спасибо, что конца урокам нет,  
Хотя с надеждой ждешь ты перемены,  
Но жизнь - она особенный предмет:  
Задаст вопросы новые в ответ.  
Но ты найди решение непременно,

**“Мой милый, если б не было войны”**  
(Музыка: Марк Минков; слова: Игорь Шаферан)

Ещё до встречи вышла нам разлука,  
И всё же о тебе я вижу сны.  
Ну разве мы прожили б друг без друга,  
Мой милый, если б не было войны,  
Мой милый, если б не было войны.

Наверно, я до срока стала старой,  
Да только в этом нет твоей вины.  
Какой бы мы красивой были парой,  
Мой милый, если б не было войны,  
Мой милый, если б не было войны.

И снова ты протягиваешь руки,  
Зовёшь из невозвратной стороны.  
Уже ходили б в школу наши внуки,  
Мой милый, если б не было войны,  
Мой милый, если б не было войны.

Никто калитку стуком не тревожит,  
И глухну я от этой тишины.

Ты б старше был, а я была б моложе,  
Мой милый, если б не было войны,  
Мой милый, если б не было войны.

### **“Синий платочек”**

There are many versions of this song; the following, which I use in my discussion, is from Нам нельзя без песен. Сост. Ю. Г. Иванов. Муз. редактор С. В. Пьянкова. Смоленск: Русич, 2004.

#### **“Синий платочек”**

(Слова Я. Галицкого и М. Максимова; Музыка Е. Петербургского)

Синенький скромный платочек  
Падал с опущенных плеч.  
Ты говорила,  
Что не забудешь  
Ласковых радостных встреч.  
Порой ночной  
Мы распрощались с тобой...  
Нет больше ночек!  
Где ты, платочек,  
Милый, желанный, родной!

Письма твои получая,  
Слышу я голос родной.  
И между строчек  
Синий платочек  
Снова встаёт предо мной.  
И мне не раз  
Снились в предутренний час  
Кудри в платочке,  
Синие ночки,  
Искорки девичьих глаз.

Помню, как в памятный вечер  
Падал платочек твой с плеч,  
Как провожала  
И обещала  
Синий платочек сберечь.  
И пусть со мной  
Нет сегодня любимой, родной,  
Знаю, с любовью  
Ты к изголовью  
Прячешь платок голубой.

Сколько заветных платочков  
Носим мы в сердце с собой!  
Радости встречи,  
Девичьи плечи  
Помним в страде боевой.  
За них, родных,  
Любимых, желанных таких  
Строчит пулеметчик,  
За синий платочек,  
Что был на плечах дорогих!

**“Әлия”**

(Music by Seidulla Baiterekov; words Bakir Tazhibayev)

Қобда, Нева суларын сүйіп өскен  
Әсем гүлін құшаққа жиып өскен  
Аққу құстың бейнебір баласындай  
Сұлу сазды, жастықтың күйін кешкен.

Әлия - ару қызы сен халқымның  
Әлия - батыр қызы сен халқымның  
Ерке құсы сен даламның!

Саған белгі орнаттық мәрмәр тастан  
Саған күнде қызыққан мөлдір аспан  
Саған күнде жазылған көркем дастан  
Саған күнде құшағын көктем ашқан.

Әлия - ару қызы сен халқымның  
Әлия - батыр қызы сен халқымның  
Ерке құсы сен даламның!

Шолпан жұлдыз - өзіңсің шоқтай жарық  
Көз алмаймыз көркіңнен тоқтай қалып  
Туған жердің төсінде мәңгілікке  
Тұр ғой сенің жүрегің оттай жанып.

Әлия - ару қызы сен халқымның  
Әлия - батыр қызы сен халқымның  
Ерке құсы сен даламның!

**“И вот опять идём в горы”**

(author unknown)

И вот опять идём в горы

Мы знаем некуда спешить  
Ведь басмачи поймут не скоро,  
Что с нами лучше не шутить.  
Ведь басмачи поймут не скоро,  
Что с нами лучше в мире жить.

Раздался выстрел одиноки  
Я быстро за скалу упал.  
Ах, слава богу, что не точно  
Душман меня на мушку взял.  
Ах, слава богу, что не точно  
Душман меня на мушку взял.

Лежу я за скалой и вижу  
Они спускаются с горы.  
В руках английские винтовки,  
За поясами топоры.  
В руках английские винтовки,  
За поясами топоры.

Наглеют прямо на глазах  
И стали мы такие злые,  
Что не опишешь на словах.  
И стали мы такие злые,  
Что не опишешь на словах.

И вот опять идём в горы  
Мы знаем некуда спешить  
Ведь басмачи поймут не скоро,  
Что с нами лучше не шутить.  
Ведь басмачи поймут не скоро,  
Что с нами лучше в мире жить.

**“Песня о Пограничниках” or “Зелёная Фурашка”**  
(author unknown)

Я зелёную фурашку сберегу.  
Майский день начищу я на ней звезду.  
Буду долго (/пьяным) гулять, не ругай меня, мать,  
В этот праздник службу вспомнить я хочу.

А она всегда суровая была.  
Пусть поёт о том солдатская душа.  
Как горела в огне, как тонула в слезе,  
Как ночами нас тушила тишина.



Как горела в огне, как тонула в слезе,  
Как ночами нас тушила тишина.

Спомним мы с тобой, братишка, про Афган.  
Тех парней геройских что остались там.  
Пусть напомнить тебе это горечь в вине,  
Нашу жизнь на последнем рубеже.  
Пусть напомнить тебе это горечь в вине,  
Нашу жизнь на последнем рубеже.

Я зелёную фурашку берегу.  
Майский день начищу я на ней звезду.  
Жавнашколь (Жанкашкой) и Хасан, Тегеран и Афган,  
Пусть земля там будет пухом пацанам.  
Жавнашколь и Хасан, Тегеран и Афган,  
Пусть земля там будет пухом пацанам.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### “Түркістан”

Халықпыз түркі түгі бір  
Халықпыз түрі тілі бір  
Түркістан тұғыр тірегі  
Мұсылман елге  
Мұсылман елге діні бір.  
Көсілген байтақ жеріміз,  
Түркі де қазақ еліміз  
Бәріне ортақ түркінің  
Түркістан түндік  
Түркістан түндік өріміз.

Қайырмасы:

Байтақ қазақ жеріне  
Жеке қонған Түркістан,  
Аңдары мен бегіне  
Мекен болған Түркістан.  
Үкіл түркі еліне  
Мекке болған Түркістан.

Құндала жатқан мыңдана,  
Ерекше жайнап нұрлана,  
Түркістан менен тұр дала.  
Қазаққа мақтан,

Қазаққа мақтан бұл қала.  
Тұрғызып кеткен бабамыз,  
Түркістан ғажап қаламыз,  
Яссауи,Ахмет күмбезі  
Халқымыз мүсіндеп күн көзін.

## APPENDIX B

### Modified ALA-LC Kazakh transliteration

А а	- a
Ә ә	- ă
Б б	- b
В в	- v
Г г	- g
Ғ ғ	- gh
Д д	- d
Е е	- e
Ё ё	- ě
Ж ж	- zh
З з	- z
И и	- i
Й й	- ĭ → i
К к	- k
Қ қ	- q
Л л	- l
М м	- m
Н н	- n
Ң ң	→ ng
О о	- o
Ө ө	→ ö <sup>44</sup>
П п	- p
Р р	- r
С с	- s
Т т	- t
У у	- u
Ү ү	- ū → û
Ү ү	→ ü <sup>45</sup>
Ф ф	- f
Х х	- kh
Һ һ	→ h
Ц ц	→ ts
Ч ч	- ch
Ш ш	- sh
Щ щ	- shch
Ъ ъ	- no transliteration
Ы ы	- y

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<sup>44</sup> For this letter, I use [ö] instead of the ALA-LC's transliteration because it is more universally recognizable as representing this sound.

<sup>45</sup> For the same reason as above, I use [ü] for

І і - ī → î  
Ь ь - '   
Э э - è  
Ю ю → iu  
Я я → ia

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